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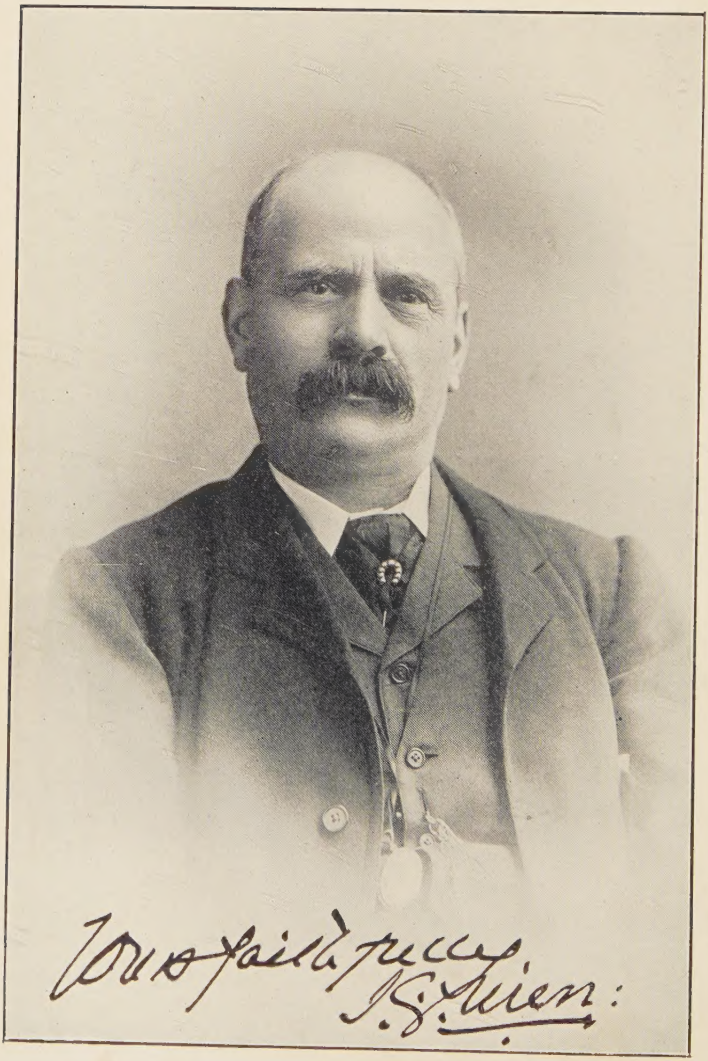
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SCILLY AND THE SCILLONIANS.

BY

J. G. UREN,

LATE POSTMASTER OF PENZANCE.

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PREFACE.

Much has been written about Scilly from time to time, but when one comes to winnow the wheat from the chaff, it is surprising how little there is left. A traveller may fill his portmanteau with any number of so-called guide books, and yet be just as much at sea as ever. Information obtained second hand, or picked up in a week's scamper through the district, does very well for a certain class of readers, who only desire to skim the surface of things, but there are others, let us hope, who look for something more solid and reliable. Perhaps, so far as Scilly is concerned, I may not succeed in imparting this knowledge, but, at any rate, I bring to the task a long familiarity with the place, and an intimate acquaintance with the people.

I am a Cornishman, fairly well conversant with the history and topography of my native county, and having lived in Cornwall for the greater part of my life, I claim to know something of its character and surroundings, and the manners and customs of my fellow-countrymen. This applies more particularly to Scilly. I was Postmaster of Penzance for thirty years: Scilly was part of my district, and I think I may venture to say, without being egotistical, that I know the place thoroughly. There is scarcely an Island I have not visited; scarcely an inch of ground that I have not surveyed. Some of my experiences I have endeavoured to embody in the following pages.

It has been a labour of love for me to look back on the many long years of social intercourse I had with Scilly, and to conjure up scenes I am never likely to see again. Time brings its revenges. Most of the people I knew have passed away, and those that remain have grown old and grey; but I still cherish pleasant memories of happy days spent on the Islands, when life was young and hearts were gay.

It is a far cry back to the early sixties, and much water has flowed over Crow Bar since I first knew Scilly more than forty years ago. I am now in the "sere and yellow leaf"—getting on towards four score in fact—and having spent fifty years of my life in the service of the Post Office (my first entry into the service dates from 1848), I have never been able to devote much time to the making of books. But the thought occurred to me that, in however crude a form, some of my recollections of the Islands might be acceptable, and, such as they are, I submit them to the verdict of a generous and I trust not too critical public. I make no claim to any literary ability, and I ask the indulgence of my readers for my many faults and shortcomings.

J. G. UREN.

Plymouth, August, 1907.

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GENERAL VIEW OF THE SCILLY ISLANDS.

SCILLY AND THE SCILLONIANS.

CHAPTER I.

The Position of the Scilly Islands, and their Strategical Value.

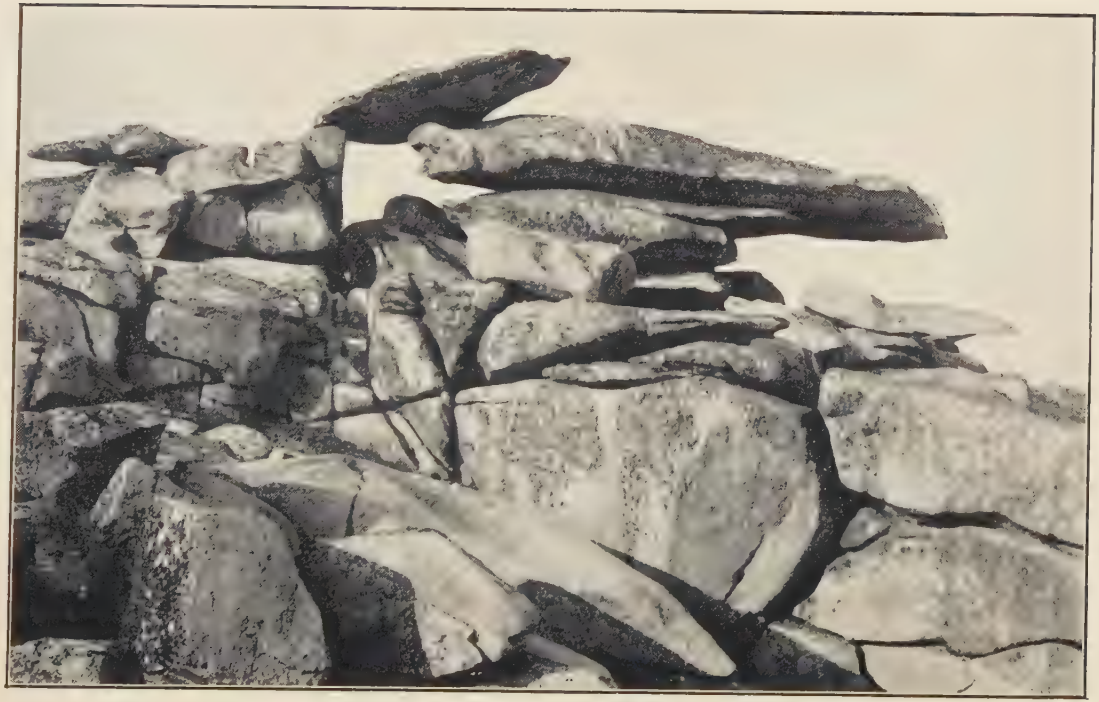
THE Scilly Islands are situated at the entrance to the English Channel, distant about twenty-five miles W. by N. of the Land's End Point. Their position gives them an importance they would not otherwise possess. Lying in the fairway, and right athwart the course of everything entering the Channel from the Westward, the Islands form one of the bulwarks of our outer line of defence, and are so placed as to cover an attack on the most vulnerable point in our armour—an attack on our chief arsenals on the Tamar, the Solent, and the Medway. At a cost considerably less than the sum expended on Portland or Holyhead, Crow Sound might be converted into a commodious harbour affording ample accommodation and protection for a large fleet, and there are many who think that the Admiralty have been very remiss in not availing themselves of the unrivalled capabilities of this splendid roadstead commanding the approach to both channels. Some day, sooner or later, (and who knows, perhaps sooner than later) we may have to fight for the command of the sea, so vital to our very existence as a nation. Once let this be wrested from us, and all the forces we could muster would be of little avail to avert our subjugation by one or more of the great European powers, with their enormous preponderance of military strength, holding us by the throat in the narrow waters of the Channel. Scouting by fast cruisers is likely to form an essential part of naval tactics in future, and, surely, no better rendezvous for those "eyes and ears" of our fleet could be found than in the neighbourhood of the Scillies.

The fact is we have had little or no experience of naval warfare since the battle of Trafalgar. We know, however, from the object-lessons of the late Russo-Japanese War that, come when it may, a sea fight will be fought under very different conditions to what it was in Nelson's time. Broadsides and boarding-pikes have given place to rifled ordnance and machine guns; and manning the tops has been superseded by bullet-proof conning towers. Efficiency in the Engine-room, rather than nautical skill on the quarter-deck, will be the determining factor of success in future. Everything will depend on speed and weight of armament. Instead of tacking, wearing, and manœuvring for position, as was the case with the old frigates and three-deckers in the days of our forefathers, the modern cruiser and line-of-battle ship, with their accompanying flotilla of destroyers and submarines, will go straight for the enemy's line, and a few hours may serve to wipe out an entire fleet, and to decide the fate of nations.

Let us suppose an engagement in the chops of the Channel between a British fleet and the combined fleets of any two other powers aiming a blow at our maritime supremacy. If we got the worst of it, where should we be? The result, under any circumstances, is by no means a foregone conclusion, and if the fortunes of war went against us, there is no place short of Plymouth (I assume that no prudent admiral would run the risk of being "bottled up" at Falmouth which is practically defenceless) where our fleet could run for shelter. And in those eighty or ninety miles we might have the battle of the Sea of Japan over again, with our ships playing the rôle of the Russians. But with Scilly, properly fortified, under their lee, our scattered squadrons could make Crow Sound a rallying point, and secure against further attack, sally forth and inflict a deadly blow on their pursuers. Japan has taught us the strategical value of islands when favourably situated, and if ever there was a case where we might follow her example, it is in the case of Scilly. Shall we be wise in time, or, as in so many other instances, leave it until it is too late?

The group of Islands forming the Scilly Archipelago, numbering over one hundred in all, are dotted over about thirty square miles of sea-space, and are of various shapes and sizes. Many of them are mere rocks, barely awash at

ST. MARY'S, SCILLY, FROM PORTHLOW.



THE PULPIT ROCK, ST. MARY'S, SCILLY.

high water, and without any signs of vegetation, save, perhaps, a tuft of sea-pinks, or a bunch of samphire. Others carry a scanty crop of coarse grass and bracken, just sufficient to graze a few sheep or goats. The smaller Islands are known by name only to the boatmen and fishermen, who use them as guide-posts to find their way in and out of the various sounds. The navigation is so intricate that, without taking the bearings of certain rocks, and noting the surf as it breaks on certain ledges, the most experienced boatman would soon come to grief.

There is deep water all around the Islands, and it is so pure and transparent that fish may be seen swimming about fathoms below. The rocky bottom is broken here and there by patches of golden sand, and where this occurs the sea is of an intense emerald green, and bright and clear as some mountain stream. Nowhere else outside the tropics is such wonderful colouring to be seen. Artists who have tried to catch these glowing tints, and to transfer them to their canvas, have been charged with exaggeration; but, in truth, it is not possible to convey by brush or pencil any idea of the glories of sea and sky as seen in and around Scilly.

Lying to the N.W. of Bryher, in a most exposed and isolated position, there is a small island known as Scilly, which gives its name to the rest of the group. It is little more than a half-tide rock, and the wonder is what can have given it this pre-eminence. The word Scilly is said to be derived from the Cornish silya, or sillus, signifying a conger, but it is difficult to trace the connection. Apparently, the rock bears no resemblance to any living organism, and is certainly not like a conger. Druidical remains are found scattered over all the Islands, and there are other indications that the place was inhabited long before the Christian era. I suggest that, possibly, the ancient Britons may have used the Island in some of their rites and ceremonies, and gave it the name of their favourite fish. Oddly enough, the conger is much esteemed in Cornwall to this day, and fifty years ago, conger stew, and conger pie, was a standing dish in every household. Your Cornishman claps everything into a pie, and with the addition of cream as a sauce, I can vouch for it, that conger pie is a delicacy which would tickle the palate of an epicure.

The coast-line of the Islands is barren and forbidding. Stupendous rocks, piled up in fantastic shapes, and weathered by the fierce Atlantic gales, stand out in all their rugged grandeur. Each Island is marked by a fringe of breakers running riot on the boulder-strewn shore, and the cliffs are channelled out into many a vaulted cavern, lined with ferns and mosses, through which the tide flows with a ceaseless roar. The bare rock crops up everywhere, and in places forms huge piles, like the Giants' Castle, and St. Martins Head. The structure of the rocks is a kind of loosely-knit, friable granite, traversed by veins of spar and mica; altogether different in texture to that raised on the mainland, which is quarried in large blocks, can be worked to a fine surface, and takes a polish like marble. The Scilly granite has a tendency to break up by exposure to the atmosphere, and the combined action of wind and rain. Thus, extensive rock-basins are formed, and the rocks, robbed of their lateral support by the disintegration of the softer strata, are poised, frequently in a curious manner, the Pulpit rock on St. Marys being a striking example.

The principal Islands are St. Marys, St. Martins, St. Agnes, Tresco, Sampson, and Bryher. These may be said to constitute the whole of the habitable area, all the other Islands being more or less barren and uncultivated. Next in importance, and the only ones boasting anything like a respectable extent of terra firma, are Rosevean, Melegan, and Annett, to the westward of the group, and Ganilly, Tean, St. Helens, and White Island, to the eastward. Seals may occasionally be seen disporting around Rosevean and Melegan; Tean and St. Helens were at one time stocked with a particular breed of rabbits, and Annett is the home of innumerable flocks of sea-birds, which lay their eggs, and rear their young, in the sandy hillocks of which the Island is composed.

A favourite trip from St. Marys is to visit Annett to obtain specimens of the various kinds of eggs. It is a long pull down to the Western Islands, and when one gets there, the task of securing the eggs is not so easy as it looks. Annett is little more than a sand heap, and so tunnelled through in every direction, that one sinks to the knees into the hollow ground, almost at every step. The place is riddled with nests, and as soon as the boat touches the shore, swarms of puffins, guillemots, razor-bills, and other

ANNETT, OR BIRD ISLAND.

THE HOME OF THE CORMORANT.

members of the awk family, forming the principal denizens of the Island, alarmed at the presence of strangers, and disturbed in the process of incubation, circle around uttering their peculiar discordant cries. If an attempt is made to seize the eggs, they peck at the intruder, defending their nests with beak and claw. Sometimes, the eggs are found deposited in a rude kind of nest on the surface, whilst others have to be sought for in long galleries burrowed into the sand. Many of the eggs are beautifully blotched and coloured, and are in great request among collectors. The proper season to secure the eggs is in the early spring just as the birds are nesting. If left later, hatching is very likely to have commenced, and the eggs are difficult to blow.

In addition to the birds which congregate on Annett, crowds of gulls, gannets, and other species of wild fowl, breed on the barren Islands, and among the outlying rocks; and occasionally rarer specimens, like the great northern diver, and the crested grebe are met with. Shags and cormorants are also very plentiful. These birds are most destructive, and levy a heavy toll of the fishery. The cormorant is a very voracious feeder, and to see him at work from daylight till dark, one can form some idea of the quantity of fish which must pass down his gullet in the course of the day. Perched on some lonely rock amidst the Atlantic surge, erect, keen-eyed, and always on the alert, motionless as a statue he watches for his prey. The slightest ripple, the faintest sign familiar to him alone, and swift as an arrow loosened from the bow he cleaves the waters, coming to the surface far away, the wriggling quarry safe within his jaws. One look of triumph, and rising on sable wing, he skims the waves till some lone cranny in the distant cliffs is reached. There, all alone, he gorges on his catch or portions out the spoil to satisfy the cravings of his callow brood.

To the eastward of the group there is a conical-shaped island known as Round Island, and this has been utilised by the Trinity House to erect a lighthouse as an additional warning to ships to keep clear of this treacherous coast. The necessity for the light had been demonstrated over and over again. A vessel standing down Channel and failing to catch the bearings of the Wolf, or the Seven Stones, was ashore on St. Martins before she could verify her position. Many casualties occurred from this cause,

and in proof of the efficacy of the light, I do not remember a single wreck in the neighbourhood since Round Island has been lit up.

The fatal and deadly character of the rocks and reefs around Scilly is borne in on one on looking at a wreck chart. This tell-tale publication marks the spot where many a good ship has left her ribs to bleach on the half-tide ledges, or has been ground to powder in the swirling tide which for ever circles around these exposed and storm-swept isles. And, if further proof were needed, a visit to Tresco affords unmistakable evidence that, within a comparatively brief period in the history of the Islands, many disastrous wrecks must have occurred of which no written record remains. For, in the gardens at Tresco, amidst surroundings sadly out of keeping with so melancholy a theme, stand the figure-heads of various ships, British, and foreign, lost from time to time round and about Scilly, of which these effigies are the sole memorial. Looking down the line of mutilated, weather-beaten figures, arranged in solemn order in these peaceful, sun-lit glades, one wonders if they could speak, what tales of misery and untold human suffering they could unfold !

A storm at Scilly is a sight never to be forgotten. Standing on Telegraph Hill, the highest point on St. Marys, from whence a fine view of the whole of the Islands is to be obtained, as far as the eye can range is one seething mass of breakers. Seas, mountains high, rolling in from the vexed Atlantic, dash against Peninnis Head, and rush through St. Marys Sound with cyclopean force and insensate fury. The wind whistles like the pipes of some mighty organ, and the very air is flecked with foam. Every now and again the Bishop is swept from base to lantern: the solid structure of the lighthouse reels with the shock, and the jagged rocks midst which the tower is raised protrude their cruel fangs. Here are the dread Retarriers, associated with one of the most fatal wrecks of the last century, upon which the doomed ship (the Schiller) hung suspended hour after hour, waiting for that help which never came. The light, which had been hidden from them by the fog, shone down on over four hundred hapless wretches clinging to mast, spar, and rigging, and being swept off like flies into the raging sea. By an unfortunate error in judgment, Captain Thomas had over-

RELICS OF THE PAST: THE FIGURE-HEAD WALK IN TRESCO ABBEY GARDENS.

A STORM AT SCILLY.

run his course and distance, and failing to stand away to the southward in time, found himself stranded on the dreaded Scillies.

They did not realise the worst, and the passengers were lulled into a sense of false security on the assurance that, when day dawned, help would be at hand. Sustained by this hope they clustered on the main-deck, and sought shelter wherever it was to be found; but as soon as the flood tide made, and a western swell—the usual concomitant of fog—surged around the ship, they were licked off one by one until only the smallest remnant remained. The light-keepers could almost pitch a biscuit on to the wreck, and were eye witnesses to this harrowing scene without being able to render any assistance. And, to our shame be it said, although Telegraphy has made enormous strides in the last thirty years, and a short length of cable, or a simple installation of the Marconi apparatus, would bridge the distance to the nearest land, the solitary Bishop still remains without telegraphic communication, and if another wreck of the same character were to occur to-morrow, in all probability it would result in a similar loss of life and property because we have failed to avail ourselves of the means science has placed within our reach.

Landsmen have really no idea of the dangers of this iron-bound coast, or the public conscience would be aroused, and we should no longer rest under the stigma of being behind little Denmark, and some of our own Colonies, in making provision for the safety of those who go down to the sea in ships. The Elder Brethren of the Trinity House have not been altogether unmindful of their duty in the matter. The Bishop, erected in 1858 with infinite pains and difficulty, every stone having to be shaped and chiselled on the mainland before it was dropped into its place, flashes its light far out over the Atlantic; the Seven Stones lightship, moored several miles off the Islands, warns the mariner to keep clear of these deadly reefs; the lights on Round Island and St. Agnes keep watch and ward eastward and westward, and the solitary Wolf, perched on a rock rising sheer out of the Channel, almost awash at high water, and having a base barely sufficient to afford a secure foundation, illumines a radius of from ten to fifteen miles, overlapping the scarcely less exposed Longships.

But with all these aids to navigation Scilly maintains its evil reputation among underwriters and ship-masters. A very old friend of mine, the late Captain Nicholas Pentreath, of Penzance (a relative of Pentreath, the artist), as fine an old sea-dog as Cornwall ever produced, who commanded the transport *Resolute* during the Crimean War, and the unfortunate *Northfleet* which was rammed and sunk in the Downs by the steamer *Murillo*, has often told me that, when he was nearing the Channel, and had got well inside the edge of soundings, he sent a man aloft to keep a sharp look-out for Scilly, and that if ever he sighted the blankety-blank place (my friend was apt to be a little flowery in his language upon occasions) from the mast-head, he brought the ship up in the wind, threw everything aback, and then called all hands to prayers and gave himself up as a total wreck.

All this, of course, is hyperbole, but, nevertheless, it is the fact that the approach to Scilly is very much dreaded. The Islands lie so low, and are so difficult to make in bad weather, and especially when they are enveloped in fog, that a ship is on them before she knows where she is. It is scarcely necessary to go back to the loss of Sir Cloudesley Shovel's fleet in 1707, or to quote the case of the unfortunate Schiller, to emphasise the point that safety lies in giving the Islands a very wide berth.

Among the many stirring scenes of storm and wreck I have seen at Scilly during my frequent visits, extending over a period of thirty years, I remember, on one occasion, watching a ship bearing up from the westward in the teeth of a south-east gale. It was blowing big guns, the ledges were all breaking, and a heavy sea poured into Broad Sound and broke on the Western rocks. The vessel was under close-reefed canvas, close-hauled, with a storm stay-sail set to steady her. She had tried to weather the Islands but failed, and now, sore beset, every sea making a clear breach over her, and her tattered sails straining in the bolt-ropes, she was endeavouring to extricate herself from her difficulties. Looking at her from the Garrison we expected every moment to see her strike one of the deadly ledges, heel over and disappear. But there is a Providence which watches over sailors and drunken men, and they frequently do with impunity what ordinary mortals dare not attempt. On she came: and to our horror and surprise made straight for St.

Marys Sound, a channel bristling with hidden dangers. No pilot would dare to have taken her through there on such a day, and for a novice it seemed like courting instant destruction. It was nothing short of a miracle, but, wonderful to relate, the ship steered clear of every peril, and emerging on the other side, squared her yards, and stood away to the southward, as if there was no such thing as broken water and rocks and shoals did not exist. Who she was, or where she hailed from, has never been discovered to this day, and probably her crew were entirely ignorant of how near they were to "sending in their cheques."

CHAPTER II.

Description of the Islands.

THE capital of the Islands, Hugh Town, named after a part of St. Marys known as "The Hugh," stands mostly on the ridge of a narrow isthmus dividing two sandy coves or bays. It contains a Church, one or more Dissenting Chapels, a Market House, Public Rooms, and two or three decent Hotels. The only building of any note is the Star Castle, erected by Sir Francis Godolphin. The Castle stands within the Garrison, and of late years has been appropriated as a residence for the Steward of the Estate, Mr. Allen. The walls are of native granite, very thick, and loop-holed for musketry, but one discharge from a modern field-piece would knock the whole place into the proverbial "cocked hat." The fortifications have been allowed to fall into decay, but there are indications that the Government is at last alive to the great importance of Scilly, and may restore the Garrison to its original purpose.*

The largest Island, St. Marys, with a population of about 1,500, is very irregular in shape, but, roughly, may be taken as being some three miles long by two broad. It is dotted all over with farmsteads and cottages peeping out of a greenery of fuchsias and myrtles, with a sheltering screen of the much-enduring tamarisk. Farms at Scilly are of very moderate dimensions. A holding of from fifteen to twenty acres is above the average, and on this the thrifty Scillonian will rear a large family and save money. There is an unwritten law, which the Lord proprietor of the Islands gives effect to whenever feasible, that tenancies shall descend from father to son, and there are many farms which have been in the same family for generations. This semi-feudalism is peculiar to Scilly, and when one speaks of the Watts', of Old Town, or the Edwards', of Trenoweth, it is understood that, so long as a

* This was written before the present Government, in their rage for economy, had practically abandoned the Islands, but who knows what the next turn of fortune's wheel may bring?

HUGH TOWN, ST. MARYS, FROM THE GARRISON.

HOLY VALE, ST. MARYS, SCILLY.

ROCKY HILL, ST. MARYS, SCILLY.

representative of either family remains, he will have a claim on the holding in preference to an outsider.

Two places in St. Marys live in my memory as typical Scilly farms:—Holy Vale, for many years the home of the Mumfords and the Banfields, and Rocky Hill, at one time in the occupation of Mr. W. Trevillick. In its general aspect Scilly is treeless. Nothing can withstand the fierce assaults of the winter gales, save a few weather-beaten elms, stunted thorns, and clumps of the long-suffering elder; and these maintain a precarious existence with their backs to the west, lest, peradventure, they should be blown clean out of the ground.

All the Cornish Coast from Cape Cornwall to Bude is whipped by the west wind, and in the battle for self-preservation vegetation shrinks away from it with instinctive dread of annihilation. But Holy Vale is situated in a cup, or hollow, scooped out of the surrounding rock, and being sheltered from the blighting, salt-laden winds, displays a tropical vegetation unlike anything to be seen in the more exposed parts of the Island. In this smiling, happy valley, all is calm, peaceful, and still. The humming of the bees, and the song of the missel-thrush, mingle with the distant murmur of the sea; branching elm, and spreading ash, the laburnum, the lilac, the purple-berried berberis, and other flowering shrubs, embower the two cottages forming the homestead; and around the rustic porch in prodigal profusion, cluster trees (for in Scilly all these grow into trees) of myrtle and fuschia, and the sweet-scented verbena shedding its perfume on the balmy air. Within the shadow of this flower-scented porch in days of old, before in the matter of dress gentility had displaced utility and clothes were meant for comfort rather than for show, the Scilly matron sat at her spinning-wheel, and from the pure native wool spun the yarn which she converted into various articles of clothing for family use, or for exportation, for even on the mainland Scilly woollens were much esteemed and commanded a ready sale.

Rocky Hill, on the other hand, is wild, barren, and wind-swept. Not a blade of grass can be induced to grow without the greatest care and trouble, and the bare rock crops up everywhere, defying the skill of the husbandman. The garden stands in a rocky cairn with patches of soil in between, the washings and detritus of ages. Nothing short

of patient labour and an abiding love for the work could ever make head or tail of the place. And yet, in spite of such uncongenial surroundings, my old friend, Mr. Trevillick, turned it into a veritable paradise, where exotic and bulbous plants grew in infinite variety. Rocky Hill in fact was one of the sights of the Islands, and next to Tresco no place better deserved a visit. I hear it is now somewhat neglected, and has lost most of its charm; but my recollection will always go back to Rocky Hill as one of the loveliest spots it has ever been my privilege to see.

Mr. Trevillick—the "Tre" betrays his Celtic origin—was a bit of a character. Frothy and impulsive like most of the race, he was, nevertheless, a man of strong convictions, fired with religious zeal, and in politics pugnacious and disputatious. Needless to say, he was a follower of John Wesley, and on a push could "hold forth" as a local preacher. Politically, Mr. Trevillick was a great admirer of Mr. Gladstone, and to hear him descant on the many virtues of W.E.G. one would think there never was such a place as Khartoum, or that Majuba Hill was associated with one of the saddest episodes in our military history.

To explore the Islands is a work of some difficulty, as many parts are inaccessible, or can only be reached with the aid of an experienced guide. It would never do, for instance, for a stranger to go "monkeying about" among the reefs and shoals which lie between St. Martins and Tresco. The currents are strong and baffling, and taking charge of the boat as she rounds some innocent-looking spit or promontory, you are stranded before you know where you are. Nor is it at all safe to approach the Western rocks without the greatest care and circumspection. These rocks are weather-worn and slippery, and afford but a precarious foothold. The tide gurgles and swirls around them, and on the calmest day of summer there is always a swell which makes landing difficult. Between the rocks there are channels broad and deep enough for a boat to pass, but they are not to be negotiated except by an expert. The slightest error in steering, or a little too much "way," and all that is left of the boat are a few chips floating away to leeward —the crew are never likely to require the services of the coroner.

I have pulled down there on a hot day in July, when the sun blazed out of a cloudless sky, and the great

THE WESTERN ROCKS, SCILLY: A CALM DAY.

THE GIANT'S CASTLE, ST. MARY'S, SCILLY.

ocean lay sparkling and shimmering like a lake of molten silver. There was scarcely any wind to swear by, and the phosphorescent spray dripped from the oars as we glided along. Yet every twelfth wave or so came home with a thud, and flopped over the rocks with a vicious swish, as if it meant business. Let the boat be caught in one of these, and without very careful handling, the chances are that your wife would be a widow and your children fatherless before one had time to say one's prayers.

It is possible to make a complete circuit of the Islands, but this should never be attempted unless the boat is in charge of a skilled pilot. An amateur would most likely drift on to one of the submerged ledges, and if he did, his own brother would not insure his life for ninety per cent. There is some very fine rock scenery in the neighbourhood of St. Martin's Head and Menewithan, but the prudent man is content to look at it from a distance. Peninnis Head and the Giants' Castle, seen from the sea are also very interesting objects, and the same may be said for Shipman's Head, and the Man-o'-war Rocks (from their fancied resemblance to a ship in full sail) at the back of Sampson and Bryher.

The Off Islands are reached by boat from St. Marys, though I have been told that, with an exceptionally low tide, the water over Crow Bar has admitted of a man being able to wade across to Tresco. At times the passage between St. Marys and Tresco is rather risky, as a nasty sea runs in Crow Sound, and a boat is apt to be swamped if not carefully handled. The distance across St. Mary's Sound to St. Agnes is shorter, but if anything more dangerous, and it requires a well-found boat and an experienced hand at the tiller to make the passage.

One of the chief attractions of the Islands are the Abbey Gardens, about which I hope to have something more to say later on. The Abbey Gardens, which are thrown open to the public without fee or reward, have a world-wide reputation, and many thousands of visitors bear witness to their beauty and their charm. There is none of the stiffness and primness of the Dutch school, where everything is ruled into line, and arranged in geometrical order; no grouping of colours in gorgeously tinted beds and flaring ribbon borders; no "bedding out," which leaves a wilderness for nine months in the

year for the sake of a gaudy display during the other three; but the rarest plants and shrubs grow in tropical profusion, and are allowed to climb and clamber at their own sweet will all over the place.

On St. Martins Head there is a day-mark (raised in 1683) which can plainly be seen from the mainland on a clear day. And, standing on St. Martins Head, the Cornish Coast in the neighbourhood of Pendeen looms up boldly and distinctly. It is here that the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House have recently built a lighthouse to guard a very dangerous part of the Channel lying between Godrevy and the Longships. It has been found that vessels going round the land, frequently did not make sufficient allowance for the set of the tide, and were carried on to the precipitous Pendeen cliffs before they could double Cape Cornwall.

THE GARDENS, TRESCO ABBEY, SCILLY.

ST. MARTIN'S HEAD AND DAY-MARK.

CHAPTER III.

*The Pilchard Fishery: Its Extent and Importance.**

THERE are several colonies of fishermen in the Land's End district having their home at Penberth, Porthgwarra, and Sennen Cove. They fish for conger, pollack, and ling in the broken ground to be found in patches all around the coast, and set their crab-pots on Cairn Baise, and other submerged reefs jutting out into the channel. At certain seasons they go further afield, and pay an occasional visit to the Seven Stones and Scilly. Their most profitable haul is grey mullet, which frequent the "zawns," and clefts in the rocks, feeding on the maggots bred in the decomposing seaweed thrown up above high-water mark. These fish fetch from 1s. to 1s. 6d. apiece on the spot, and are caught up for the Continental markets, finding their way even to Paris and Vienna. Once upon a time a "school" of pilchards is met with, and with any luck comes within "shooting" distance.

The pilchard is the harvest of the sea in Cornwall, and, directly and indirectly, gives employment to a large number of the population, male and female. The fish make their appearance in the late autumn sweeping around the coast in immense shoals. Their presence is marked by flocks of gulls, and by the colour of the sea, which takes a dark, almost bloody tinge. The drift-boats levy a heavy toll by sinking their nets in mid-channel, but the most efficacious way of capturing the fish is to enclose them in large seines, which are stationed at various points along the coast. When the fish are enclosed the seine is warped into shallow water, and the process of "tucking" begins. That is, a smaller net called a "tuck-net" is placed within the seine, and into this the fish are "tucked," and landed by means of small boats. They are then washed, heavily salted, and stacked away in cellars. After about three weeks, when all the oil has been expressed, and the fish converted into "fair-maids," bulk is broken, they are

* The industry is now terribly handicapped by a heavy import duty which the Italians have put on the fish, and we appear to be quite powerless to come to any terms with them.

packed into barrels, and are then ready for export to the Mediterranean ports.*

Seine-owners are called "adventurers":—that is, a certain number of men pool their capital, and divide the profits, if any, at the end of the season. The season extends over the months of September, October, and November, and during this period the seines are kept what is called "in pay," and men called "huers" are stationed on the headlands to keep a sharp look-out for the passing "schools." It is a risky and uncertain business, hedged about with all manner of strange customs and restrictions. For instance:—each body of "adventurers" is entitled to priority, or "stem," according to the number of seines they own, and when a "school" of fish appears, A. shoots first, then B. and so on, until every seine has had its turn. No seine is allowed to "shoot" out of its proper turn. Some years there is a glut of fish (as many as 6,000 hogsheads being taken at a time) and they are hardly worth curing, hundreds of tons being used for manure. Then come a succession of lean years, when, from some unexplained cause, the fish desert their usual feeding ground and betake themselves to fresh fields and pastures new. What this means to the fishing population of Cornwall can only be estimated by comparing it to the failure of the herring in the North Sea, or the cod on the banks of Newfoundland.

One day back in the early seventies, in the fall of the year, there was a cry of Hevah! (fish) at Scilly. Up to this time the season had been a frost: not a seine had been wetted, the men were eating their heads off, and capital and plant lay idle. So when it was known on the mainland that there were fish at Scilly, the joyful news was soon flashed all over the district from Mevagissey to Port Isaac, and everybody was agog hoping that the much longed-for "school" would come their way. The nearest seine to Scilly was at Sennen Cove, where the "Covers" had a venture all to themselves; and as "Matthey" Nicholas, one of the men concerned, who told me the story, said:—"We cudden laave they their fish go by without having a slap at 'em."

"Matthey" himself is worthy of passing notice. There were five Matthey Nicholases (pronounced Nicholls) in direct

* A system of wet salting is now coming into vogue, and instead of being pressed, the fish are packed into barrels direct from the pickling vat.

TOL PEDYN-PENWITH, OR THE CHAIR LADDER.
CORNWALL.

lineal descent, living in the village of Sennen Cove. He was "the old Matthey," his son "young Matthey," his grandson "the boy Matthey," his great-grandson "little Matthey," and his great-great-grandson "Matthey's Matthey." All the family were most intrepid boatmen, inured to every danger, who knew the set of the tide as it swirled around the Land's End promontory, and seethed about the solitary Longships. They manned the lifeboat, relieved the lighthouse, and, from time to time, had been instrumental in saving many lives.

Indeed, I am not at all sure that I do not owe my own life to them. One thing is certain, I never was so near "losing the number of my mess" as on the occasion to which I am about to refer. It happened in this way:—The shore-end of the Scilly cable had parted during the run of a heavy ground sea after a westerly gale, and, in company with a party of skilled telegraphists, we were engaged in carrying out the necessary repairs. It was too small a job for a cable ship, and, besides, the fracture was so situated that she could not possibly get at it. So we chartered an old billy-boy smack called the "Anglo-Saxon" to bring down a length of cable from Henley's Works at North Woolwich, and, watching a favourable opportunity, had her towed out to the spot. The Scilly cable is landed at Millbay, about midway between Tol Pedyn and the Land's End, one of the most dangerous places along this perilous coast. A big rock, called the "Diamond Horse," stands out prominently, and the cliffs all around are precipitous and forbidding. Access to the little cove by sea is only possible at certain states of the tide, and in the finest and most settled weather. Even then, the difficulty of getting in, is only equalled by the difficulty of getting out again. If there is any shift of wind, or the slightest disturbance of the static conditions, goodbye to any craft caught in the breakers which roll into Millbay.

Anyway, the "Anglo-Saxon" had to make the attempt, and by laying out kedges, we managed to warp her into the cove, and got her securely moored over the broken cable. The old billy-boy bucked and jumped at her anchor like a bull caught in a gate; but we set to work, and after much labour and difficulty, fished up the two ends, got them in-board, tested both sections for insulation,

and prepared to splice-in the new piece to restore communication. Now, as everybody acquainted with cable laying knows, making a satisfactory joint in a heavy shore-end under these circumstances, without any of the appliances available on a cable ship, was no easy matter, and before we could finish the job, and throw the bight overboard, it came on to blow a regular snorter from the south-east. The gentle ripple caused by the tide as it surged over Cairn Baise, and the creamy foam which just lapped the base of the chair-ladder, were soon turned into a howling wilderness of broken water. A terrific sea, breaking far out in the shallow ground, poured into the cove, and catching the little smack under the quarter, lifted her stern high in the air, and then receding let her down to bump on the hard shingle, till every timber in her frame shook and shivered, and her keelson, buckling under the strain, threatened to force the mast over the side. The wind was dead on shore, and so slim were the chances of the "Anglo-Saxon" ever getting off, that any underwriter who had covered the risk, would willingly have paid 95 per cent. to reinsure. The only thing to be done was to slip her cable, hoist such little sail as she was able to stagger under, and try and work out into open water.

Fortunately, I had taken the precaution to engage Matthey Nicholas and his boat's crew to stand by in case of necessity, and by passing a hawser from the smack to the boat, we managed to slew her head around seaward, and to get the rag of a staysail to draw. The place was a veritable *impasse*, with scarcely any outlet, and we were at the bottom of the neck of the funnel. If she missed stays—well, for certain, I should not be here to tell the tale. By a succession of short tacks—going about just in time to avoid some dangerous rock—we were, luckily, able to weather Tol Pedyn, and gain the open sea. But this was only getting from the frying-pan into the fire. Mount's Bay seethed and boiled like a cauldron. The Rundlestone reef was breaking along its entire length, and tons of foaming water swept into Porthgwarra Cove, and broke in thunder on Porthcurno beach. Green seas, each tipped with a crest of feathery foam, romped and gambolled about, and, rising in their strength, smote the cliffs at Nangizle, and licked the face of Castle Treryn. It was a war of giants; a conflict in which titans struggled for the mastery,

CASTLE TRERYN, AND PORTHCURNO, CORNWALL.

and, pigmies as we were, the battle raged around us as if our little barque was the centre of the universe, and worlds depended on whether we sank or swam.

Now, if one must be cast adrift on an angry sea, if there is one craft more than another one would choose not to be on board of, it is a Yorkshire billy-boy. Bluff in the bow, high in the stern, and low in the waist, she is better fitted to navigate a reach in the Thames, than to ride out a gale at the mouth of the Channel. The only thing she can do to perfection is to pay-off to leeward when asked to lie up close to the wind, and to wallow into every sea like a grampus. Moreover, in our case, there was no accommodation beyond what was required for the crew of two men and a boy, and the stock of provisions consisted of a small quantity of "soft tack," and the remains of a shin of beef. There were six of us (besides the boat's crew who had come on board to assist in the navigation) huddled together on the deck of the Anglo-Saxon, with a falling barometer, the gale increasing in strength, and the night coming on. The question was whether we had better stick to the crazy old hooker, which at any moment might founder under our feet, or put our trust in the boat which was towing astern. Apparently there was not a toss-up between the chances. If we stopped where we were, and got blown off the land, we should certainly be starved; and if we took to the boat there was every probability of our being drowned. In the end, as a choice of evils, we decided on the boat.

My gentle reader, have you ever tried stepping from the deck of a ship on to a boat in a gale of wind? If not, then bless your stars that you have never been called upon to perform a feat of gymnastics which would put a tight-rope dancer to shame. At one moment the boat is halfway up the shrouds, and threatens to come on board bodily; the next she is sucked under the counter, or dashed against the garboard strake, till every plank shivers, and she takes a plunge into a hole as deep as a well. If you jump too soon, when the boat is on the up-take, the chances are you will miss her altogether, and have an involuntary bath. If you leave it until it is too late, when she is making her dive into the abyss below, ten to one if you don't bark your shins against the thwarts, or come a cropper into the bottom of the boat. The physicological moment is when the boat is just on a level with the deck, but that moment is fre-

quently as difficult to calculate as it is to define the difference between Socialism and anarchy. It is all a matter of practice and judgment, and many a man has stood on the deck of a sinking ship and hesitated to take the fateful leap, though only a few ticks of the clock intervened between him and eternity.

Well, we took in the slack of the painter, hauled the boat up alongside, bundled into her in the best way we could, and shoved off. Matthey's Matthey took the tiller, and the other four were at the oars, with Old Matthey in the bow to give directions as to the steering, and so we pulled away into the darkness. The Longships looked down on us with its solitary eye, the Wolf blinked at us occasionally, as much as to say What are you fellows doing out here on a night like this? and the twin lights on the Lizard shed their lambent beams full across the Bay. For the rest, we were alone with our fate, a fate which only seemed too likely to end in disaster. We all sat grim and silent. Not a sound was to be heard save the heavy breathing of the men as they laboured at the oars, and the gurgle of the tide as it hissed viciously astern. The only possible landing place was at Sennen Cove, miles away around the Land's End, and to reach it, we had to make a long detour outside the Longships, to avoid the many dangers strewn along our path. Any mistake in handling of the boat, or the slightest error in calculating the force and impact of an approaching sea, and all would be over—our cockleshell of a craft would be swamped to a certainty, and the crew sent to David Jones' locker, before anyone had time to say Jack Robinson!

Old Matthey peered out anxiously into the night, and every now and then gave some hurried instructions to the steersman:—

"Sober thear, Matthey, sober mee son. 'Aase her a bit. Dost 'na see that thear geet comber comin' hoam right a' top on us? Ef we do ship 'un thee'st be down feeding the cougars long 'afore passon Raw cud pray for'ee. (The Rev. R. I. Roe was then rector of Sennen.) Ah, that's brave! She ded tak' 'un like a Dolly."

This, as the boat rose on the crest of a towering sea which threatened to engulph us, and dropping into the trough, was lost between two solid walls of green water.

There are several dangerous submerged rocks in the neighbourhood of Land's End, which none but a skilled

THE LONGSHIPS LIGHTHOUSE, OFF THE LAND'S END, CORNWALL.

boatman dare approach. Amongst them are the Sharks' Fin and the Kettle's Bottom, two well-known obstacles to navigation. To go too near them, as the tide frolics and curls around their shaggy sides, is instant destruction. So as we got into broken water the task of managing the boat became all the more difficult, and it required all the old Matthey's knowledge and experience, to enable us to steer clear of these hidden dangers. By voice and gesture he admonished the man at the helm to be on the alert.

"Mind what thee'st 'bout, Matthey, thear's the Kiddle's bottam breaking full on the weather bow. Ef we do touch he, the boat 'ill be scat all to jowds (*i.e.*, knocked all to pieces) and ther'll be fouer more weddows in the Cove 'afore mornin'."

And in another minute we had swept by this dangerous rock, just awash, much too near to be pleasant.

At last, after knocking about for many hours, we rounded the land, and saw the welcome lights of Sennen Cove glimmering in the distance. The villagers knew that Matthey's boat was out, and were getting rather uneasy about us. The dim light of tallow candles —known in the trade as "long sixteens" —guttered and spluttered in the cottage windows, trying, vainly, to pierce the inky darkness outside, and anxious eyes were turned seaward for any signs of the missing boat. Sennen Cove is nothing more than a break in the coast line, as it shelves away into Whitsand Bay, the village nestling at the foot of the cliffs; but by digging and blasting, an approach to it has been made by cutting away the solid rock. It is difficult to negotiate in fine weather, and no one but a native would dare make the attempt under the circumstances. To find the channel, we had to take the bearings of certain rocks which were only visible at intervals, and then, mounting on the top of a smothering sea, urge the boat forward for all she was worth to avoid being caught in the backwash, and perhaps dashed against some projecting rock before we could recover our way. Old Matthey unshipped his oar, and crouching down in the bow, acted as pilot.

"Starboard, Matthey, hard a starboard! Port, port! for the life of 'ee! or thee'st be ashore sure as I'm a livin' sinnar."

And so, coaxing and gesticulating, we were guided into smooth water, beached the boat, and hauled her up the slip out of harm's way.

All this time we six cable hands lay huddled together in the bottom of the boat, drenched to the skin, more dead than alive, and in mortal terror as to what would be the outcome of our perilous adventure. We were like drowned rats, and benumbed with the cold, so it was decided that all hands should adjourn to the "First and Last," an inn up at Sennen village, to dry our sodden clothes, and try to restore the circulation with copious libations of hot beer and rum—a favourite beverage with the Covers. As we sat around in the "settle" of the large open hearth of mine host Richards, smoking the pipe of peace, and sipping the fiery concoction fit only for stomachs which had been copper fastened, feeling in that happy state of contentment known only to those who have escaped some deadly peril, I asked the young Matthey—then verging on seventy—how he accounted for the longevity of his family.

"Well," he said, "I'll tell'ee. Thear's feaather ovver thear; he's ninety come next feasten Sunday, an' 'a never tooked a doase of fessack en ess life. Hee's a bit deef, an' 'a caan't go to hill as 'a used to; but, Lor' bless'ee, 'a can man a oar, or chow a crust weth the best on us. He do get a bit of a qualm sometimes—turn a bit giddy like, and ef we dedden catch 'un, he'd faal down 'pon the planchon (the floor). Then we do giv'un a drop of Maister Davy's (a firm of wine and spirit merchants at Penzance) best rum, an' in a bit o' while he's as right as a trivet. 'Tes my 'pinion," said young Matthey sententiously, "that people do die 'afore their time, 'cause the rum hedden so good as 'a used to be."

Shade of Sir Wilfred Lawson what a creed! Yet, as if to confound the extremists, here in this last inn in England, their bronzed and weather-beaten faces lit up by the glow from a crackling log fire, sat these five generations of hardy fishermen, stretching down from father and son, and from son to son's son, and one son more, all hale, hearty, and vigorous. They had never known what it was to live but from hand to mouth, and, not unfrequently, want stared them in the face. Their larder was the sea, their storehouse among the everlasting rocks, and what these did not yield in the way of maintenance was all "*prunella* and

SENNEN COVE, LAND'S END, CORNWALL.

caviare." At the best of times their fare consisted largely of "barley fuggan" and "licky broth," varied by an occasional feast of butcher's meat; and if once upon a time they paid a visit to the "First and Last," drowning their sorrows in the flowing bowl, and quaffing the much-loved hot beer and rum, which thawed their blood, and warmed the cockles of their hearts, who shall say them nay?

The seines were stowed away in two large boats called seine-boats, covered over with tarpaulins, and the boats moored off the Cove ready for action. The "Covers" had a small steam launch hardly bigger than a punt, they had picked up at an auction, and which they used to shift the seine-boats from one part of Whitsand Bay to another according to the state of the weather. She had a tin-pot boiler which primed at the slightest pressure, and an old ramshackle engine which broke down under anything like a head of steam. Scilly was twenty-five miles away across one of the roughest bits of water to be met with in the Channel, with the Wolf on the one hand and the Seven Stones on the other. It was getting on towards night, blowing strong, and a nasty sea running.

But "hevah!" was like music to their ears. They had had no luck since the haul of grey mullet in the early spring; the winter was upon them, and things looked anything but rosy. If they could "shoot" their seines and enclose a tidy "school" of fish—then worth some £3 a hogshead—it would set them on their legs and keep the wolf from the door. So, nothing daunted, they got up steam, took the lumbering seine-boats in tow, and stood out to sea. One man was stationed in the stern-most boat to steer her, and the rest were crowded into the launch. A lantern was hoisted on a stump of a jury-mast to ward off possible collisions with vessels passing up and down, and every now and then they blew a blast on their tiny whistle as an additional protection.

Before they got half-way across the tow-rope parted, and the two boats, with the one solitary man perched in the stern, disappeared in the darkness. The tide runs like a mill-race between the Islands and the main, and before the little spluttering tug could put about and get on the track of the truant boats, they had drifted away hopelessly to leeward. Nothing could be seen of them save the occasional flicker of the mast-head light as it bobbed up and

down like some marine glow-worm, now on the top of the wave and now in the trough of the sea. One can imagine the plight of "young Matthey"—for it was he—adrift in mid-channel, on a dark night, without chart, compass, or a rag of a sail, in a crazy boat, laden to the water's edge, which would neither wear nor steer. He shouted to his companions, and they shouted back to him, but their voices grew fainter and fainter as the boats drifted further and further apart, and at last died away altogether. "Matthey," like the ancient mariner, was alone on the silent sea. The men on the launch were very little better off. She had but a few inches of freeboard, and in turning round to go in search of the recreant boats, she was very nearly swamped. The water rose almost to the fire-bars, and it took two men constantly bailing to keep her free. With the fire put out, she would be a helpless hulk, and in imminent risk of floundering.

Well, to cut the matter short, after dodging about for some time, and having many hairsbreadth escapes, they managed to pick up the missing boats, and ultimately found shelter inside St. Martins. The fish had gone, and their labour was all in vain; but the pluck and daring of the men in undertaking such a journey remains on record as an instance of the courage and endurance of Cornish fishermen. "Aw, mee dear," said Matthey, "I tell 'ee we wor brave an' skeered. I ben in a' bra' many tight plaaces a'fore now, an' a' looked death straate in the faace a bra' many times, but a' never seed 'un grizzling at me as a' ded that thear night we Covers went in saarch of pilchars ovver to Scilly. Never no more, mee dear, never no more."

CHAPTER IV.

The Geological Formation of Scilly.—Was it once Part of the Mainland?

I DO not profess to be an authority on the subject, but there appears to be very little doubt that, at some remote period before the dawn of history, the Scilly Islands formed part of the mainland. It is a moot point, I believe, whether the granite formation so largely a part of the counties of Devon and Cornwall, is the result of some upheaval—the lateral pressure of matter thrusting the rock upwards—or is due to the gradual subsidence of the earth's crust in the process of cooling, leaving the bare rock exposed. Anyway, in the Tors of Dartmoor, and the rugged ridge running right through Cornwall, crowned with Rough Tor and Brown Willey, St. Agnes Beacon, and Carn Brea, we have evidence that vast changes in the configuration of the country must have taken place.

Applying this to Scilly, what do we find? We find that the rocks at the Land's End and Scilly almost dovetail into each other. St. Martins Head stands out like a sentinel beckoning to Cairn Kenidzhek, and Cairn Kenidzhek, with a few more centuries of denudation, may form another St. Martins Head. The flora and fauna are the same, and the hungry soil, covered with a scanty crop of gorse and bracken, cuts down like the halves of the same cheese. Then we have the legend—more or less mythical—that a large tract of land known as Lyonesse once stood between Scilly and the main. The story runs that only one man escaped the inundation, mounted on a white horse. He is supposed to be a remote ancestor of the Trevelyans, and it is said that a white horse forms part of the family coat-of-arms to this day. Further, there is the undoubted fact that, from time to time, the remains of ancient forests have been found at various points along the shore of Mounts Bay. One of these forests was unearthed in sinking the shaft of the old Wherry Town Mine in the

neighbourhood of Penzance, and I myself have seen the trunks of trees, fossilized with age, dug out of the beach there.

I do not know what geologists will say, but, to the casual observer, there is ample evidence to support the theory that, at one time, Cornwall was of much greater extent than it is now. Formidable rocks and reefs like the Brisons, the Bucks, and the Rundlestone, near to, but detached from the land, show that the county has been crumbling away for ages. Massive granite out-lyers like Castle Treryn, Tol-Pedn-Penwith, and the Land's End, rearing their heads in silent majesty out of the sea, and bidding defiance to the ravages of time; the "zawns" which bite into the coast wherever the strata enables the sea to exercise its force, and the denudation of the surrounding land, all point to the conclusion that nature's mill has been grinding slowly but very small, and that if the work of erosion and attrition goes on at the same rate in the future as in the past, the county is destined to undergo still further transformation.

St. Michael's Mount is described by ancient writers as "The Castle in the Wood," and, even now, it would not take much of a tidal wave sweeping into Mounts Bay, and piling up its waters along the valley to Lelant Creek, to convert the greater part of the Hundred of West Penwith into an Island, isolating towns like Penzance and St. Ives, and cutting off a dozen Parishes from the rest of the County. And seeing this going on before our eyes, it needs no very great flight of the imagination to picture the time when the forty parish churches said to have been engulfed when Lyonesse was submerged, rung out their chimes, and looked down on fields of waving corn, where now from thirty to forty fathoms of the waters of the Atlantic dash against the sea-girt Wolf, and churn themselves into foam as they strike the rocks on which is perched the storm-swept Longships.

I am not prepared to vouch for the truth of the story, but there is said to be some mysterious connection between the Mouse's Hole in Mounts Bay, and Piper's Hole in Scilly, and that if one could only get through, there would be no difficulty in establishing communication. I have explored both caverns, but I confess I have never penetrated far enough to put this to a practical test. I am

ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT, CORNWALL.

rather inclined to think that these caves, like so many others to be found round the coast, are the adits of some disused mine workings, or, more probably, natural cavities used by smugglers to hide their cargo after a successful run.

The fact is well authenticated that, at one time, both on the mainland of Cornwall and at Scilly, smuggling formed one of the chief occupations of the sea-faring population. The French Coast lay handy by, and it was so easy to slip across, that it seemed like flying in the face of Providence not to embrace the opportunity of turning an honest penny at the expense of the Revenue. Fowey, Looe, Polperro, Prussia Cove, and other places up and down the coast, each had their quota of daring, desperate men, always at war with the King's Officers, and who thought it no sin to circumvent an exciseman. The mysterious lights which appeared on the headlands and around the shores of the bays, popularly supposed to be decoys used by wreckers, were really signals to guide and direct the smugglers where to land their cargoes. And there is little doubt that many of the ghost stories figuring so largely in Cornish folk-lore and legendary tales, were concocted, and kept alive, to prevent inquisitive people from prying too closely into what was going on.

But at Scilly there was no need for all these stratagems and precautions. The Brittany coast lies conveniently near, and it was only a matter of a few hours for a boat to slip across, load up with contraband, and be back again before the sleepy preventive-men had grasped the fact that they were being "done." Once inside the Islands, the smugglers were able to show a clean pair of heels to any Revenue cutter which dared to follow them. If they were hard pressed, they threw the cargo overboard attached to buoys, and fished it up at their leisure. I have known Scillonians outwit the coastguard in this way not so very long ago. Apart from the danger of detection, which in their case was remote and shadowy, the only risk the Scilly smugglers ran was being taken prisoners, and clapped into jail, before they could get clear away. Many of them were caught napping in this way during the first Empire, and had some difficulty in regaining their liberty. Napoleon never really abandoned the dream of invasion, and was not likely to part readily with men who might be used to man the navy of "perfidious Albion."

Scilly thus became the happy hunting ground for a particularly hardy and venturesome class of smugglers, who were able to follow their calling with something like impunity. They were not versed in all the subtleties of the law; probably they had never heard of Adam Smith, or John Stuart Mill, and knew nothing about conventions, tariffs, bounties, rebates, drawbacks, and all the paraphernalia of fiscal controversy. They only knew that there was the "stuff" and here the need of it, and nothing seemed to them more natural than that the want should be supplied. It never entered into their heads that they were committing a crime by simply transferring the goods from one country to another. To them, the Custom House Officer, and the Exciseman, were the embodiment of obstruction and oppression, and whenever they had the opportunity they belaboured these unfortunate officials within an inch of their lives.

In short, they were "Free Importers," and taking a leaf out of the book of their modern prototypes, might very well have argued, that if a free loaf, a free larder, and a free breakfast table, is the be-all and end-all of all true political economy, why not a free pipe, and a free cellar? At any rate, the Scillonians endeavoured to live up to this ideal. There were few cottages on the Islands without their supply of "eye water," and "eau-de-cologne," which were the cabalistic names given to French brandy, and many a keg was hidden away in some snug corner to be produced when a market offered.

CHAPTER V.

Are the Scilly Islands the Cassiterides?—Evidence of Early Mining Operations.—Distinctive Character of the Population.

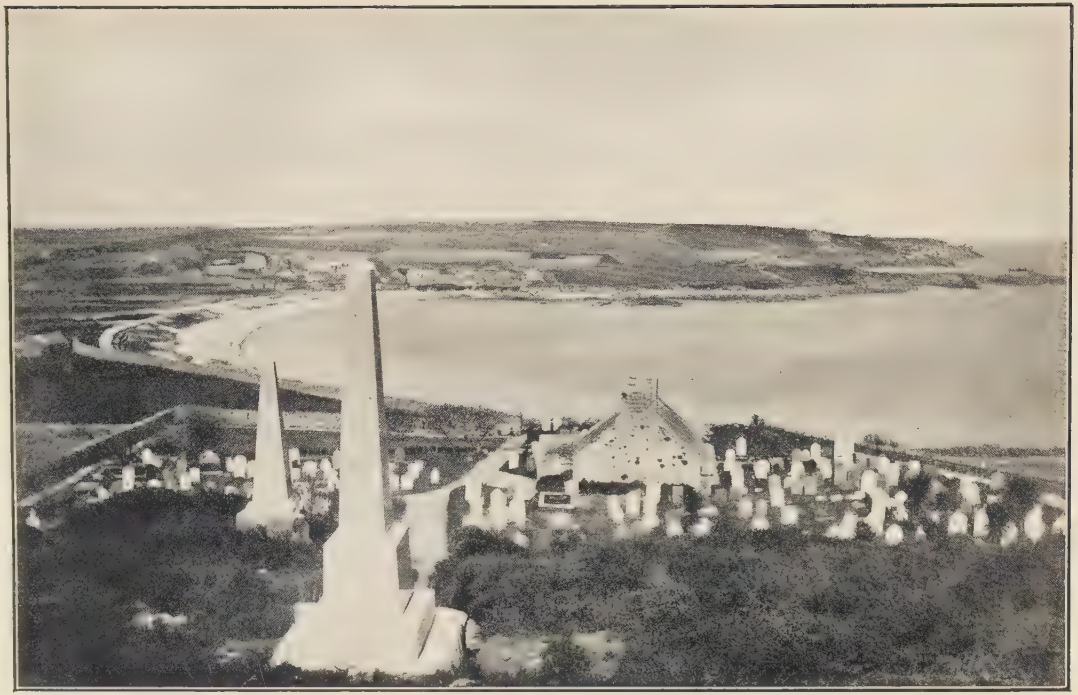
THE early history of the Scilly Islands is somewhat obscure, but there is no doubt that they were inhabited at a very remote period. Tumuli and Kistvaens containing human remains have been discovered, and the rude stone circles so prevalent in this part of the country, point to some primitive form of worship, or a crude attempt at defence against marauding foes. Athelstan conquered the Islands in 938, and Olaf Trygvason, who forced Christianity on Norway, is said to have been converted by a Scilly hermit. Henry I. handed the Islands over to the Abbey of Tavistock, but they reverted to the Crown in 1539. In 1568 Queen Elizabeth leased them to Sir Francis Godolphin, (hence the name of Dolphin Town at Tresco) and over the doorway of Star Castle stands the letters E.R., with the date 1593. The Islands remained in the Godolphin family for more than 250 years, and in 1834 passed into the hands of the late Mr. Augustus Smith, who took over the residue of the lease from the Duchy of Cornwall.

Some suppose that Scilly is the Cassiterides, or Tin Islands of the Ancients, and that they were visited from time to time by the Phœnicians. Be this as it may, the stratification of the soil undoubtedly lends itself to stanniferous deposits, and we know, that less than thirty miles away as the crow flies, in the Parish of St. Just, which may have formed part of the continuous tract of country extending to Scilly, the ground is highly mineralized both for tin and copper. It is also rather remarkable that all the leading lodes in that district underlie towards the sea, and many of them extend far out into the Channel. The Crown lode at Botallack, for instance, which yielded tens of thousands of pounds to the fortunate shareholders, had to be followed far out under the bed of the Channel, and the crust above the miners' heads was so thin, that the grinding of the boulders could distinctly be heard when a heavy ground sea was running. The lode was reached by a

diagonal shaft sunk into the edge of the cliff, and inclining seaward just above highwater mark. This was the shaft which the King and Queen (then Prince and Princess of Wales) descended during their visit to Cornwall in 1865. At Levant also, the most profitable part of the ore is extracted from lodes running for a considerable distance underneath the sea. It need hardly be said that, getting the minerals —tin, copper, wolfram, and arsenic—under these circumstances, is a task of enormous difficulty, and the whole thing is complicated by divided ownership, the Crown, the Duchy, and the Ground landlord, each claiming a share of the "dish" or dues.

There are no masterly, well-defined lodes at Scilly, such as are found on the mainland, and which, even now, are worked to a depth of over half a mile from the surface. But the ground at Scilly is "keenly for tin," and indications are not wanting that, at one time, an appreciable amount of the metal was raised. Shallow drifts and burrows, known in Cornwall as "old men's workings," are scattered about, and it seems quite possible, that tin in the form of an alluvial deposit may have been present in sufficient quantities to induce these primitive miners to search for it. Similar deposits are now being successfully worked on some of the Islands of the Malay Archipelago. There are no signs of smelting operations, and assuming the Scilly Islands to be the Cassiterides, the inference is that the Phoenicians must have carried away the ore in its crude state and refined it afterwards by some process of their own.

The inhabitants of the Scilly Islands bear distinct traces of foreign origin. The St. Agnes men are short and thick, with dark hair and eyes, which suggest that they may have Spanish or Moorish blood in their veins; whilst the St. Martins men at the other end of the group, are tall and fair, with long, silken beards, pointing to a possible graft of the stock of the Old Norse Vikings. The two Islands are some three or four miles apart, and contain a population of 300 and 175 respectively; but, apparently, there has been no intermarrying, each of the little communities maintaining its own marked characteristics. You may know an Agnes man by his complexion and his speech, which is short and crisp, just as you may recognise a St. Martins man by his stature, and the peculiar singsong tones in which he addresses you.



THE CEMETERY, OLD TOWN, ST. MARYS, SCILLY.

Both seem to have inherited a daring courage, and a love of adventure, from their early progenitors. The Hickes of St. Agnes, and the Ashfords of St. Martins, number amongst them some of the bravest pilots and boatmen to be met with between Scilly and the Orkneys, and their name is associated with many a daring deed which has never figured in the report of the Royal Humane Society. It was a St. Agnes boat, in charge of Obadiah Hicks, which felt its way down to the wreck of the *Schiller*, and the crew were instrumental in saving the few survivors of that lamentable catastrophe. It was the St. Martins men who, when the *Delaware* was lost at the back of Sampson, dragged their boat right across the Island, and went to the rescue of the crew otherwise doomed to certain destruction.

The people of St. Marys, however, are of a more polyglot character. They have probably been recruited by waifs and strays drifting there under various circumstances, and by immigrants crossing over from the mainland—a strain of the aboriginal Celt, mixed with the later Saxon. But, even here, the Scillonian has developed traits differing entirely from the parent stock. The Cornishman is bluff, open-handed, hospitable and inquisitive. He wants to know all about you and your belongings, and after twenty-four hours' acquaintance, will post himself up in your family history, and be able to trace your pedigree back to the Norman Conquest. The Scillonian, on the other hand, is close-fisted and secretive, canny as the Scot in looking after the bawbees, and does not take kindly to strangers. The Cornishman will share his last crust with you, and with many handshakings, and "How ar' 'ee mee dear?" welcome you to bed and board; the Scillonian is apt to be a little less effusive, and more calculating, and whilst performing all the duties of hospitality with strict propriety, will probably sum you up more with an eye to the main chance.

Due, no doubt, in a great measure to its isolated position, Scilly receives but a small addition to its population from the outside. Families living on the same Island inter-marry generation after generation without the least admixture of new blood. Ethnologists tell us that this is destructive to longevity, and tends to undermine the stamina, and sap the power of endurance of the race. This conclusion, however, is scarcely borne out by the results in

this case. As a rule, the Scillonians are strong, healthy, and virile, and having once passed through the vicissitudes of childhood, live to a ripe old age.

On visiting the pretty little cemetery at Old Town, where rest the bones of so many generations of the Islanders, side by side with the hapless stranger who has there found a solitary grave, one is struck with the inscriptions on the head-stones. Seventy, eighty, and even ninety is not uncommon, and it would seem from these records that, had the patriarchs, or old Par, lived at Scilly, they would have been reckoned as mere boys. In fact, the only person who runs the risk of being starved to death is the doctor. There is only one amongst the lot, and but for the particular branch of his profession which involves attendance upon the ladies, the people are so beastly healthy that his occupation would be of the most casual and intermittent a character. My old friend, Dr. Moyle, who helped into this world of woe so many hundreds of Scillonians, had a hard struggle to earn a livelihood, though his fees were modest, and he was never known to refuse a call to the off Islands in the worst of weather.

With due regard to the laws of consanguinity and affinity, up to comparatively recent times, the Scillonians were a sort of happy family, and formed a little colony entirely to themselves. Many of them lived and died without ever having been off the Islands, and a trip "to England," as crossing over to the mainland was called, was a red letter day in their calendar. Forty years ago, when I first knew the place, I frequently met with old men who had never seen a railway, and to whom the wonders of telegraphy were a sealed book. Like most of the "Celtic fringe," the Scillonians are superstitious and impressionable, and, when their feelings are aroused, liable to be carried away with a religious fervour which is part and parcel of their temperament. This usually takes the form of extreme Nonconformity: the Church and all its works is *anathema maranatha*. Their chief delight is in a revival, a love feast, or a missionary meeting; and if, perchance, some shining light of the Methodist persuasion should honour them with a visit, he is exalted into a Pope and fed like an alderman.

There is a strong vein of reverence running through the Scillonians' character, and this may probably be

MEMORIALS OF THE WRECK OF THE "SCHILLER," IN OLD TOWN CEMETERY.

SUNSET, SCILLY

accounted for by their surroundings. They are face to face with Nature in her sternest and grandest moods. The grey, granite cliffs, the everlasting roar of breakers, the lightning-charged clouds, the glorious sunsets, and the ever-changing effects of sea and sky. These phenomena, which they see around them on every side, seem to have imbued them with a spirit of piety, and without being in any way gloomy or sacerdotal, they are much given to the contemplation of sacred subjects, and espouse a form of religion almost Calvinistic in its austerity.

There are few more beautiful sights than a sunset at Scilly. It is, let us say, a day in leafy June, the month of all the year when Nature dons her brightest garb to grace the bridal of the earth and sky. From the look-out station within the Garrison, the great ocean stretches away to the Banks of Newfoundland without a check. At one's feet the tide toys with the rocks, and a gentle ripple breaks in soft cadence on the shingly shore. A breeze from the South, soft and caressing as a child's embrace, fondles the clumps of scrubby gorse, and rustles amongst the leaves of the few stunted, wind-swept trees. Rabbits, seeking their feeding ground, gambol in the bracken, or scurry to their holes within the copse. Flocks of snow-white gulls wend their way to some far-off roosting place. High over head, the lark on quivering wing chants her last carol to the dying day, and dropping like a stone, seeks her nest upon the flowery sward. Far out in the West, the sea sparkles and scintillates like the facets of a diamond, and reflecting the colours of the cloudless sky, changes like an opal—now green, now blue. Presently, with stunning-sails set alow and aloft, and flying her jack for a pilot, a full-rigged ship looms over the horizon's brim, and, getting between the Islands and the sun, looks like some mammoth sea bird spreading its wings to catch the favouring gale. And lo! as one looks, day's tireless orb climbing down the golden hours in its allotted task, sinks like a fiery torch beneath the Western main. Once more its course is run, and night descends upon the labouring earth. But who can paint the glories of the setting sun as seen at Scilly? Who can describe the tints of the crimson, roseate clouds; picture the wondrous afterglow which sets the heavens aflame, till twilight deepens, and evening shadows creep across the sky?

CHAPTER VI.

Isolation of the Islands.—The Arrival of the Mail.—Ship Letters.

FOR many years after I knew the Islands, Scilly was completely isolated from the mainland, and during the winter months, it was nothing unusual for a whole week to elapse without any communication. Day after day the Islanders pined to know something of what was going on in the outer world, but there was no piercing those thirty miles of angry waters. Anxious eyes were turned in the direction of St. Martin's Head, and when the ball on the flag-staff at the Coastguard Station dropped, which indicated that the steamer was in sight, the place was all alive. In about an hour she was alongside the Pier, where nearly all Scilly had assembled to meet her.

The arrival of the steamer was the one great event in their lives. There were friends to greet, passengers to cater for, news to be picked up, and the thousand and one things trifling in themselves, but full of interest to the dwellers in an out-of-the-way place like Scilly. It formed the only link with civilization. Everybody was agog. "Squire" Davis was sure to be there, helpless and ponderous in his one-horse shay; Captain Newman, whose vocabulary of expletives was inexhaustible; "Clem" Mumford, who was said to be able to argue the polish off a brass knocker, and the farmer, anxious to know what his last consignment of potatoes had fetched. Both shipping agents—the Banfields and old Buxton—were on the *qui vive*, and eagerly scanned the *Gazette* to see what ships had been listed, and if there were any likely to call at Scilly; whilst the pilots were equally concerned as to whether their services would be required. Boatmen on the look-out for a hobble, and porters in search of a job—in short, the little coterie gathered together on the Pier-head was a complete microcosm of Scilly society, drawn together from various motives, and each having his own particular axe to grind.

The steamer brought the mail, which consisted of one small bundle of letters, and a few newspapers. The mail was enclosed in a basil-leather bag with a brass label, and, as representing the Majesty of Government, this bag was ostentatiously taken to the Post Office by the Captain. There it was received with all due state and ceremony by the old post-mistress, Miss Scaddan, who forthwith had the premises securely "tiled" during the process of sortation. This done, she flung open the little wicket in the window, which was the only outward and visible sign of officialism, and proceeded to dispense the precious missives. In the meantime, boats had come in from the Off Islands, and quite a respectable crowd had gathered waiting to be served. Cries of "Any letters for Tresco," "Anything for Agnes," were heard, and the fight for precedence was just as keen as I remember it among the Amals in front of the British Post Office in Constantinople, who cursed their ancestors, and took away the character of their female relatives in various languages, if they were done out of their turn. There was always a scramble for the letters for the Off Islands, as the boatmen were allowed a gratuity of a penny each for delivery, and pennies count for something in a Scillonian's arithmetic.

With the exception of an occasional delivery within the township of Hugh Town, there was no free distribution of correspondence anywhere throughout the Islands. Letters were exhibited in the office window, and people living in the country were expected to read the addresses, and claim anything that belonged to them. When, later on, I was able to arm burly "Bob" Scadden, the nephew of the postmistress, with a pouch and a badge, and give a general delivery after the arrival of each steamer, it was thought that the millennium had come, and that there was nothing more to hope for in the shape of postal facilities. By way of contrast, I may say that there is now a Post Office on each of the principal Islands, all of them being Money Order and Saving Bank Offices, and the correspondence exceeds five thousand letters a week.

The Scillonians were also interested in Her Majesty's mails in another, and to them far more important sense, than any benefits they derived under an improved postal administration. At one time, within my recollection, contracts for the conveyance of mails to places beyond sea,

were not entered into by the Government to anything like the same extent they are at present. I believe I am correct in saying that, with the exception of Cunards, the P. and O., and the Royal, there were very few companies subsidized for the purpose. I myself put the very first mail under the Union Company's contract, on board the old "Celt," Captain Brown. She lay in Plymouth Sound well up in Jennycliffe Bay, and the mail consisted of one small bag each for Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Natal, St. Helena, and Ascension, and a bag made up specially for H.M. ships at Simons Town. The whole lot was stowed away in the stern-sheets of a waterman's boat. The contract time was thirty-five days. It will serve to illustrate the growth of our Colonial correspondence when I say that, before I left Devonport in 1864 (Devonport was selected as the port of embarkation as a sop to his constituents by the late Mr. James Wilson) these mails had swollen into over 200 bulky bags and packages, requiring a steam-tug to take them off to the ship. The distance is now covered in less than fourteen days.

All the correspondence from the Australian Colonies and New Zealand, was conveyed by sailing-ship, and known as "ship-letters"—the postage was 8d. the ½oz. Under the Merchant Shipping Acts, ship-masters were (and I believe are) compelled to accept any mail matter tendered to them, and to deliver it up at the nearest port. They were allowed a gratuity of a penny a letter, and a halfpenny a newspaper for the Service. A gratuity was also attached to the boatmen who landed the mail.

Scilly, lying at the entrance to the English Channel, was in the best position to intercept these homeward-bounders, and the pilots always kept a sharp look-out for them. If, on boarding an Australian liner, it was found that the Captain had embarked a mail, there was joy in the camp, and all the native cunning was brought into play, to try and outwit him, and drive as hard a bargain as possible. As I have said, the Captain was entitled to a gratuity, which, generally, was his own perquisite. He was bound to hand over the mail to the pilot, as the ship might be three or four weeks beating up channel; and rather than have any further bother over the matter, the Captain frequently signed an authority for the pilot to receive his share of the gratuities.

LLOYD'S SIGNAL STATION AND WEATHER OBSERVATORY, ST. MARYS, SCILLY.

It was purely a speculation, as the actual contents of the mail was an unknown quantity; but the Scillonian was generally able to make a pretty shrewd guess as to the number of letters and newspapers, and adding them up by a process of mental arithmetic, offered the Captain a lump sum for the lot. I have often paid a Scilly pilot from £50 to £60 for the combined gratuities on a single Australian mail.

Needless to say this is all altered now. Sailing ships have become almost extinct, and the greater part of our foreign and Colonial mails circulate through the Suez Canal, and across France and Italy. Instead of being a subject for barter between a Scilly pilot and a shipmaster of the old school, who was usually a better sailor than he was a logician, the correspondence from our Australian possessions, fills no inconsiderable space in a mammoth mail steamer, and freights long special trains.

A case came under my notice where a tea-clipper took on board a mail at Shanghai, which was stowed away in a locker in the Captain's cabin. The ship had a remarkably quick run home, and in the hurry and confusion of picking up a pilot in the Downs, (they never saw land until off St. Catharine's Point) getting into dock, etc., the Captain forgot all about the mail, and failed to discover the omission until he was well on towards the Cape on the return voyage. It was a serious matter, as he was under heavy penalties to deliver up the mail at the first port he touched at. Naturally, my friend Captain P. was in a blue funk over it, and after duly weighing the pros and cons, did no better or worse than pitch the whole lot overboard; and, strange to say, nothing more was ever heard about it from that time to this. Fancy the Captain of a P. and O. or an Orient liner jettisoning his mail in this way!

With the efflux of time, Scilly ceased to be the landfall for merchantmen entering the English Channel, but it still retains its position as a signalling point. Lloyds maintain a signal station there, and the Meteorological Office use it as an outlying post to give warning of westerly gales. All steamers from North American ports bound east, endeavour to communicate with Scilly, because it is the first land they make, and, secondly, it enables them to forestall their arrival at Plymouth by some six or seven hours. During the Franco-German War, Scilly was

largely availed of by the Germans as the first neutral port in the Channel. They dared not risk running for Falmouth or Plymouth, lest they should be overhauled by a French cruiser. At that time France was the stronger naval power of the two; the German Fleet was not "in being," and William-the-second-to-none had not shaken his mailed fist in the face of all Europe.

CHAPTER VII.

Development of Marine Telegraphy.—The Old Telegraph Companies.—The First Attempt to Land a Cable at Scilly.

WHILE the Scillonians were lamenting the loss of their time-honoured prestige as the first port in the Channel, and casting about for some means to repair their battered fortunes, there reached them, almost like an echo from another sphere, an account of the wonders of Marine Telegraphy. They had heard of the failure of the *Niagara* and the *Agamemnon*; and how, after that abortive attempt, with the fortuitous aid of the much-abused *Great Eastern*, a cable had been successfully laid across the Atlantic from Valentia to Heart's Content, linking together the Old and the New World. They knew that other schemes were in the air which eventuated in the great and complex systems of the Eastern, and the Eastern Extension Telegraph Companies, stretching from Porthcurno in Cornwall, to India, China, and Australia, and covering all the East with a net-work of cables. They were aware that all the supposed difficulties in dealing with a submerged cable—insulation, conductivity, and tensile strength—had been overcome by improved mechanical knowledge and appliances, and the creation of a class of vessels specially designed as cable ships, and fitted with elaborate apparatus for testing, paying out, and picking up. And it occurred to them that it would be a very great boon, if some kind fairy would spin a few miles of this magic rope, and drop it down snugly between the Land's End and Scilly. Dreams of unbounded prosperity floated before their eyes. Homeward-bound ships would make Scilly their port of call, and being in touch with the great centres of commerce, would prefer getting their orders there, rather than run the risk of navigating the Channel. Mark Lane, Lloyds, the Liverpool Exchange, and all the other marts where merchants and shippers do congregate, would look to Scilly for the best and earliest information; and seeing that our worst storms are brewed down West

along the Atlantic sea-board, the clerk of the weather would be in a much better position to give timely notice of the approach of the depression, and issue his warnings accordingly.

But these were idle dreams with but small chance of being realized. Telegraph undertakings were a drug in the market, and the stock at a heavy discount. The whole country was in the grip of two or three companies working purely with an eye to profit, and thinking more of the interests of their shareholders than the convenience of the public. The ground was mapped out to yield dividends, and the plea that "it would not pay" was a fatal bar to any extensions. For many years the old Electric and International Telegraph Company, which held a monopoly in the West of England, stopped short at Plymouth, and refused to extend their wires into Cornwall. The large district between the Tamar and the Land's End was thus entirely without telegraphic accommodation, and it was only by guaranteeing the Company against loss that they were at length induced to run a single wire to Falmouth. For some time this did duty for the whole county, and unless one happened to live in proximity to this line, telegraphing was an expensive luxury not to be indulged in except in the direst necessity.

So long as these conditions obtained it was quite evident that there was no hope for Scilly. As a speculation, the laying of a cable was hopelessly unsound, and would never return a fraction of interest on the capital outlay. The Admiralty, the Board of Trade, and the Trinity House were appealed to, but they all fought shy of so risky an undertaking; and as no private Company would touch the thing with a long pole, Scilly remained shut out in the cold. If anything occurred, such as a wreck, or the landing of a foreign mail—both events not at all unusual—a pilot cutter had to be hired at a cost of £5 to convey the news, or to take the postal matter across to the mainland. I have known a ship-wrecked crew to be shut up in Scilly for a whole week without being able to communicate, and, apart from the loss to underwriters and other parties concerned, there was the doubt and anxiety as to their fate which cannot be measured by any monetary standard.

Matters remained in this state until well on into the sixties, when a movement was set on foot for the acquisition

of the telegraphs by the Post Office. The outcome of this agitation was the Telegraph Act of 1869, under which the Companies were to be bought up under certain conditions. This is not the time, nor is this the place to write the history of that transaction. We know that the price was scandalously high, and that to this day, the public are deprived of privileges they would otherwise enjoy, owing entirely to the concern being over capitalised.

It will be remembered that the original Bill had to be withdrawn, and this, to use a familiar expression, "gave away the whole show." The Government having shown their hand, the Companies knew exactly the terms of the proposed transfer, and they set to work to make the bargain as profitable to themselves as possible. Old plant was furbished up, old poles and wires requisitioned, useless extensions carried out, and salaries and gratuities made to look as liberal as they could be on paper, so that, when in 1870, the actual transfer took effect, there was a perfect saturnalia of extravagance with Mr. F. I. Scudamore as the high priest. And, as usual, when he has to deal with vested interests, (the Parcel Post and Telephones to wit) John Bull was fooled to the top of his bent, and smitten hip and thigh. Not only did the Companies reap a golden harvest at the expense of the public, and got most of their principal employees pensioned off on princely salaries, but Mr. Scudamore was in such a hurry to pile up the cost that he actually used over two millions of the Exchequer balances without the authority of Parliament.

But with so many good things knocking about, and money flowing like water, it was hardly to be expected that outsiders would stand by and see the fortunate shareholders in the old Telegraph Companies scooping in their profits, amounting, in some cases, to something like cent. per cent., without having a finger in the pie. The Telegraph Act included the whole of the United Kingdom, and from the date of its passing no individual, Company, or Corporation, could erect a wire, or transmit a telegram, without the licence and consent of the Postmaster-General. Certain Companies were scheduled in the Act, and they might be trusted to extend their borders by every possible means to take advantage of the very liberal terms under which they were to be absorbed. With a new-born zeal for the public convenience which they failed to evince while their monopoly

was secure, they were as busy as ants, running wires hither and thither, and setting up poles in the most out-of-the-way places—the more miles the more paras—and getting ready generally to execute a very agreeable form of hara-kiri.

But, lying altogether outside the Companies field of operations, (though within the scope and purview of the Telegraph Act) there was a considerable part of the country which they failed to reach. Over and above the rural districts, which, because it would not pay, the Companies took no pains to develop, there were the Channel Islands, the Shetlands, and Scilly, which for years had been begging and praying for Telegraphic communication, but which had been left severely alone. So long as an extension to these outlaying localities had to be approached on a purely business footing, and with due regard to the earning capacity of the line, capitalists fought shy, and Company promoters passed by on the other side. But no sooner was it noised abroad that the Government was about to acquire the Companies' undertakings, than speculators and syndicates tumbled over each other in their eagerness as to which should be first to carry out the deal.

They argued in this way: —All inland telegraphs in existence on a given day—that is to say the date on which the Telegraph Act received the Royal assent—would have to be taken over on the terms and conditions laid down, and seeing that those terms were highly favourable to the Companies, and, consequently, disastrously unfair to the State, it followed that a good slice of profit would accrue to the lucky shareholders in any concern in a position to treat with the Government when the fateful day arrived. They reckoned, however, without their host, as the sequel will show.

In pursuance of this policy, and to widen the basis of the plot for "milking" the public, three Joint Stock Companies were hastily formed—the Guernsey and Jersey Telegraph Company, the Shetlands Telegraph Company, and the Scilly Islands Telegraph Company, and they went to work "hammer and tongs" to get their cables made and successfully laid, before they were estopped by the provisions of the Telegraph Act, then being forced through Parliament. Obstruction had not then been reduced to a fine art, and the rules of the House did not, apparently, admit of a bill being blocked so effectually as it can be now.

There were, however, a few financial experts who saw that the country was being handed over to be plucked, and they tried to stem the torrent, but Mr. Gladstone urged the Bill forward with all his magic eloquence ; it had the support of the entire Liberal party, and they were aided and abetted by the members representing the railways and telegraphs who were to share in the spoil. And so the deed was done, and a financial burden placed on our backs which thirty-five years of rigid economy -not to say cheese-paring—on the part of the Post-office has failed to lighten, and which, even now, is trotted out as a reason for withholding some long hoped for and reasonable reform.

But, so far as these "bastard" Companies were concerned, it was only touch and go. A cable was laid to Lerwick, and another was on board the old *Caroline* ready to cross the Channel to Jersey, when the guillotine fell, and the game was up. The Scilly Company, however, had not been idle. Henley's people at North Woolwich had manufactured a cable for them, and they had it put on board a steamer, and despatched in hot haste to the Land's End. The shore-end was landed, the splice made, and the ship began to pay-out towards Scilly. The electrician in charge was a Mr. Rowlands, a peppery little Welshman. Now, from some cause, which has never been fully explained, but probably owing to bad pilotage, and not making sufficient allowance for the set of the tide, they got out of their course, and found themselves five miles south of the Islands, with every inch of the cable expended. Here was a pretty kettle of fish. The only thing to be done (I should explain that the cable was a poor thing, and would not stand the strain of picking up) was to buoy the end, and wait until a fresh supply of cable could be had down from the Works. But all this would occupy time, and time was precious. Unless the cable could be laid, and certified as being in working order within a given number of days, they would be in the same predicament as the Jersey Company, and would not be allowed to land it at all.

But adventures are to the adventurous. If facts will not square with circumstances, so much the worse for the facts. Mr. Rowlands was quite equal to the occasion. He had not graduated in a telegraph school for nothing. Clapping down the brake, and going full speed ahead, he parted the cable a few fathoms from the ship, and steamed

triumphantly into Scilly towing the fag-end behind them. It was a gala day with the Scillonians. No one who had not been shut up in these lone Islands in the Atlantic, could appreciate what the cable meant to them. It was the dawn of a new heaven, and a new earth, and they were keeping high festival. The shore-end was landed near Peninnis Head, hauled up over the cliffs by willing hands, carried into the Cable Hut, and joined up to an old Morse Inker, which, with the necessary batteries, had been sent over in advance. The other end was at Millbay, close to where the unfortunate *Kyber* was lost, in charge of another representative of the contractors.

The object, of course, was to get readable signals through the cable, not only to satisfy the Company that the work had been satisfactorily performed, but to show that the ground was occupied before the Telegraph Act took effect. While the cable remained intact this was all plain sailing, and the ship continued to exchange signals with the Land's End Hut up to the time of the fracture. But, with the two ends lying several miles apart at the bottom of the Channel, the feat did not appear to be so easy of accomplishment. Even Signor Marconi never professed to be able to transmit a current through such a medium.

It is not for me to say how it was done. Some said that old Rowlands short-circuited the cable inside the Hut, and by a deft manipulation of the key, managed to create and repeat his own signals. He was a veritable Lord Kelvin in technical knowledge compared with the ignorant crowd around him, and no one was likely to criticise the doings of an expert under the circumstances. At any rate, I can testify that I saw signals, which purported to have passed over the cable, printed in plain characters on the Morse slip, and on the faith of these signals the contractors issued their certificate, and the Company took over the cable. Needless to say the whole thing was a ruse. The ruptured cable lay dead and idle at the bottom of the Channel—lost past all recovery. But the inventive genius of Mr. Rowlands had saved the situation. The Scilly cable was "in being," and would have to be reckoned with when the critical time arrived. This was in 1869, and the following year, some time after the Post Office had taken over the Telegraphs, another cable was successfully laid and is working to this day.

PENINNIS HEAD, ST. MARYS, SCILLY.

It may be mentioned in passing that the financing of these cables did not turn out the good thing it was expected to be. The syndicate providing the capital, numbered amongst them some of the keenest and most far-seeing men of the City, and the electrician was the late Nathaniel J. Holmes, well-known for his energy and ability. But, somehow, the grand coup did not come off. As we have seen, the Jersey cable was arrested in transit, and as regards the other two, on the ground that they were not scheduled in the Act, the Post Office sat tight, and absolutely refused to have anything to do with them. Having the "corpus" left on their hands in this way was an unlooked-for contingency, and upset all their plans. There was nothing for it, however, but for the syndicate to work the cables themselves, though the traffic scarcely covered the cost of management. This went on for several years, until at last, anxious to be quit of a bad bargain, the Companies went hat in hand to the Post Office, and sold both concerns, lock, stock, and barrel, for a mere song.

The fact was there was little or no traffic at Scilly worth speaking of. Occasionally, when a ship or two arrived, there might be a bit of a spurt, but at other times the work went down to zero. We tried a low tariff, and we tried a high tariff, with the same result. At first, following in the wake of the Post Office (which had introduced a uniform rate at the transfer), we charged 2s. 6d. for twenty words, with free addresses, but this was so much abused that a word tariff had to be adopted—everything to be paid for. We found, what everybody else has discovered, that in granting the public a concession, a liberal allowance must be made for that large section who always exact the last pound of flesh, and, like the Yankee, having paid their money "want to see the show." Addresses were not only spun out to an inordinate length—sometimes more than double the number of words in the text—but were actually used for advertising purposes.

Here is an example:—Lloyd's agents at Scilly used to report the passing of the Hamburg-American and North German Lloyd's steamers to the Companies' agents, Messrs. Smith Sundius & Co., Millbay Road, Plymouth. When they could indulge in the luxury of free addresses, and an unlimited number of words in the text up to twenty for a single rate, the message would run something like this:—"Your

steamer the *Pomeranian* passed our station at two this Friday morning showing night signals. Wind S. W. moderate. Weather fine." Now mark the difference when the senders had learnt the virtue of brevity through the best of all mediums—their breeches pocket. The words in the address were cut down to two—"Smithsundius, Plymouth," and the message would read: "*Pomeranian* East 2 a.m."

This was really all the agents wanted to know—all the rest was mere padding and at the rate of 6d. per word, was sent for the same money; but because the senders could indulge in rhetorical flourishes without costing them anything, they loaded the cable with forty words when five would have sufficed. It was this which induced the Post Office to abandon the old system of free addresses which they inherited from the Companies, and I have no hesitation in saying, speaking from a long and varied experience, that had not something of the kind been done, long before this, the lines would have been so blocked with dead and unremunerative matter, that it would have wrecked the whole concern, and rendered the Inland Telegraphs unworkable.

Amidst all this disputation, the one fact remained that the Scillonians had secured their cable. But, alas! it did not bring back prosperity. "All things come in time to those who wait," but this comforting axiom brought small consolation to the Islanders, who saw all their long-cherished hopes dashed to the ground. Circumstances had entirely changed. The old order was passing away. New forces and new methods were coming to the front, and to meet these conditions all Scilly had to offer was a roadstead difficult of access, and a coast to be dreaded and shunned. Serving a useful purpose back in the days when the old sailing craft threshed their way home against adverse winds and baffling currents, and were glad to seek shelter wherever it could be found, Scilly was put out of the race when steam became the motive power, and ships were able to keep the sea irrespective of wind or weather.

Scilly had always been looked upon as more or less of a casualty port, and Marine Insurance Offices heaved a sigh of relief when any risks they may have covered were reported from the Lizard as "all well." Any ship overtaken by misfortune away down to the westward, naturally made

CROW SOUND FROM THE GARRISON, ST. MARYS, SCILLY: SHIPS AT ANCHOR IN THE ROADSTEAD.

for Scilly as the first port available. Scarcely a winter passed without several "lame ducks" being brought into Scilly from some cause or other. One had sprung a leak and had to be beached to prevent her from sinking; another had carried away her spars, and limping along under jury-masts, was glad to be assisted in, whilst a third, perhaps, had been pooped by a big sea which had swept the decks and rendered her helpless. But whatever the cause, they all brought grist to the mill, and, for the nonce, made Scilly one of the busiest little places south of the Clyde. Ship-wrights, riggers, sail-makers, boatmen, and labourers were kept fully employed, and ship-brokers and sutlers flourished. I have known from a thousand to two thousand pounds to be paid by the underwriters under an average statement in respect to a single casualty, and, of course, most of this money circulated locally.

Then, again, Scilly was largely availed of as a port of call. Crow Sound was seldom without its complement of shipping waiting orders to proceed to the port of discharge. Picking up an easterly gale, and being unable to make either Cork or Falmouth, homeward-bound ships put into Scilly in hopes that the consignees of the cargo would give them their orders, rather than run the risk of the ship being blown off the coast, and probably wrecked, before she could complete the voyage. During the winter months especially, I have known vessels to be knocking about in the chops of the Channel for several weeks without getting any "forrader." This was Scilly's opportunity, and quite a little fleet would be riding at anchor in Crow Sound waiting the pleasure of the holders of the bills of lading. There were ships of all rigs and every nationality, from the trim little English barque to the rattle-trap Greek brig; and from the lumbering Norwegian to the smart Yankee flying the Stars and Stripes proudly from her peak—all crowding to the then World's great Emporium, the teeming ports of the United Kingdom. The cargoes would be just as varied. Wheat from Odessa, Galatz, and Abrail, rice from Rangoon, hemp from Manila, timber from Moulmein, bones from Fry Bentos, and jute from Calcutta. In the case of grain cargoes, samples would be taken, and if the markets were favourable, probably the ship got her orders at Scilly: otherwise, she had to proceed to the port named in the charter-party. A certain number of lay-days

were stipulated for in the contract between the consignor and the consignee of the cargo, and if it suited the convenience of the latter, he kept the ship waiting her full time short of having to pay demurrage. All this spelt business for the Scillonians; the Governor got his anchorage dues, butchers and bakers increased their returns, and the farmers had a better market for their produce.

A TYPICAL OLD SCILLY PILOT.

CHAPTER VIII.

Pilots and Pilotage.—The Decay of the Old Channel Pilot.

NOTHING more forcibly shows the great change which has come over our mercantile marine than the decay of the old Channel pilot. He was as essential to the Master Mariner of a by-gone day as the compass. Knowing the lay of the land, the set of the tide, and the run of every current between the Lizard and the Downs, and from Cape Cornwall to the Great Orme's Head, he took charge of the ship as soon as she got into narrow, overcrowded waters, and steered her safely into port.

And at no one point was the skill and knowledge of this class of men more valuable than at the entrance to the English Channel. It might be that for days a ship had not seen the sun, and was groping about to pick up the land to determine her position. She had probably taken a cast of the lead, and knew from the nature of the bottom that she was somewhere inside the edge of soundings, and ought to sight either Scilly or the Lizard. But her exact whereabouts was all a matter of conjecture, and one can imagine the joy of the crew on seeing a pilot-boat loom up out of the mist, and bear down upon them. There would be an exchange of signals, and a brief conversation through the speaking trumpet:—Where was she from? Where was she bound? What was her cargo? and so on; and eventually, if terms could be satisfactorily arranged, the pilot-cutter lowered her small boat, and put on board one of their number to navigate the ship to her destination. At Falmouth, in its palmy days, there was quite a fleet of these pilot cutters, which cruised off the Lizard, and intercepted any vessel making for that prominent headland. If she was bound for Falmouth, there was the port right under her lee; if she was making for London or Liverpool, the Channel pilot was just as capable of taking her there. No place came amiss to him, and he was as much at home in the North Sea as in St. George's Channel.

And, foremost amongst these old sea-dogs, were the Hickes, the Ashfords, and the Penders of Scilly. Pilot-cutters were stationed at St. Marys, St. Martins, and St. Agnes, and from thence they patrolled the Channel from Ushant to the Smalls. Under summer skies, when there was not enough wind to belly the canvas and the sails flapped idly against the mast; or with everything bowsed-up taut, when the spreading mainsail caught the glint of the setting sun, and the gaff-topsail lay as flat as a board, they clawed to windward with the least breath of air. In winter, when the tempest shrieked through the shrouds, and towering seas kissed the angry clouds, they hove down short, and with a close-reefed mainsail, and the merest rag of a staysail, hammered away at it, lest some poor foreigner with a hazy reckoning, and still more doubtful landfall, should need their services and they not be at hand to assist him.

They were up to every dodge for cheating wind and tide. Frequently, a pilot would be absent for weeks on a stretch, and the first that was heard of him was from London, Liverpool, or Glasgow, where he had taken a ship "on the run." Scilly pilots held the Trinity House certificate for both Channels, and if they could not persuade a ship-master to come into Scilly, they were equally competent to take him to any other port from Bristol to Bremen. If a ship was becalmed, and had run short of provisions, the pilots took off fresh supplies; and I am not prepared to take an affidavit, that, once upon a time, when the opportunity offered, they did not do a little in the contraband line—barter a dozen eggs for a plug of tobacco, or a sack of potatoes for a case of Hollands. The coastguards, like Nelson, were very apt to put their telescope to the blind eye, and, at any rate, they were not like Sir Boyle Roche's bird, and could not be in several places at the same time. So occasionally the Scilly pilots were able to supply their friends with a drop of the "crater," and a bit of real Cavendish, or negro-head.

We are justly proud of our boatmen and long-shoremen who, taking their lives in their hand, go to the rescue of some unlucky ship thumping her bottom out on the dreaded Goodwins, or being pounded into matchwood against the iron-bound Cornish Coast. The work they do is told in many a story, and for valour and self-sacrifice, their name is known wherever brave deeds meet with a

SCILLY PILOT CUTTERS AT THEIR MOORINGS.

just reward. But it may be doubted whether even they run such risks, and are exposed to so many dangers, taking all the year around, as were the old Scilly pilots. I have known the Scilly pilots put to sea when, to a landsman, it seemed sheer madness. Nothing was to be seen but a mass of broken water; nothing to be heard save the screaming of the gulls, and the boom of the surf breaking on the deadly ledges. Yet, slipping their buoy behind the shelter of some friendly reef, these brave men would go forth, apparently into the very jaws of death, to assist some hapless ship in distress, and endeavour to guide her into a haven of safety.

And the pity of it all is that while these men, who were the very salt of the channel, are being superseded and laid on the shelf, the pilotage of British waters is getting more and more into the hands of foreigners. I am told that many foreign captains are now so well-equipped that they refuse the assistance of English pilots except when absolutely compelled to employ them. But it is no use chanting a dirge over the fate of the Scilly pilots. They are the victims of circumstances the pawns which must be sacrificed in playing the game.

Time has laid its reforming finger upon them, and the doctrine of utilitarianism has brushed them aside. The pilot-boats—smart little cutters with lines like a racer, which could sail within two points of the wind, and ride out a gale without shipping a sea—have either been broken up or sold. The pilots have dropped off one after another, and as the occupation ceased to be remunerative, there was no inducement for younger men to come on in their place. And so the race has become practically extinct, though their courage and their devotion to the call of duty will long live in the memory of those, who like myself, knew their capabilities and sterling worth.

At this time of the day, a Scilly pilot might scour the Channel from week's end to week's end without getting a "hobble," and what with one modern contrivance and another, his eggs would addle and his potatoes sprout before anybody would be found to swop the value of a hank of spun-yarn for all his once much-prized stores. No longer does the white-winged barque, or the full-rigged ship with royals set and courses hauled well aft, appear in the offing, and, to the delight of the Islanders, hoist her

number and ask for a pilot to take her into port. The old teak-built East Indiamen, which hammered her way down the Indian Ocean and round by the Cape in one hundred and twenty, or one hundred and thirty days, and thought herself fortunate if she could "pick up" St. Helena to refill her tanks with brackish water, her lockers with worm-eaten biscuits, and her harness casks with fossilized beef and rusty pork, has been replaced by the Ocean tramp with a gang of coolies in her stokehole, which makes a bee-line for home through the Suez Canal, and has a quarrel with Mincing Lane if she is more than six weeks on the passage.

The twin-giants, steam and electricity, have revolutionised the world, unlocked the secrets of nature's storehouse, and given us the mastery over forces, which, a little more than fifty years ago, would have been thought uncanny and supernatural. And, apparently, there is no finality to what may yet be accomplished. With steam and electricity harnessed to our chariot, who can say what are the limits of our discoveries in the field of science; what boundaries can be fixed to our mechanical triumphs? With these two all-powerful agents working in unison, our obedient servants and willing slaves, we can cross continents, bridge rivers, and scale mountains, and all we need now is a fulcrum to enable us to lift the world. We have already put a girdle around the earth, and practically annihilated time and space.

One effect of these far-seeing changes has been to dry up the fountain of commerce along its accustomed routes, and to turn trade into new channels. Places like Ismalia and Port Said, which were of little or no account, have sprung into notoriety, while others, like St. Helena, have been pushed into the shade. We have created a Southampton, but Falmouth is shut out in the cold. The result of all this, so far as Scilly is concerned, has been disastrous. If a whole park of artillery were to bombard it, it would hardly find a ship as a target; one might drag a draw-net across Crow Sound without being able to fish-up as much as a length of chain-cable; and were a typhoon to burst upon the Islands, not a spar, not a chip could be found, on which it could wreak its fury. Scilly may yet serve to verify a reckoning, confirm a bearing, or grace an entry in the log—but going near it—not while a shovel-full of coals is left, or the screw can make one single revolution.

CHAPTER IX.

Neglected State of the Islands.—The Effect of Environment.—Prevalence of Certain Names and Other Marked Characteristics.

FOR more than two centuries and a half down to 1834, the Scilly Islands were held by the Dukes of Leeds, under a lease from the Crown. During the greater part of this period, Cornwall itself was a veritable terra incognita almost entirely cut off from the rest of the country—a sort of no-man's-land beyond the pale of civilization. The roads were mere tracks, and the only means of locomotion the pack-horse. The traveller who crossed the Tamar and penetrated into the wilds of "Western Barbary," was very much like an explorer entering an unknown land. He tightened up his girdle, took an affectionate farewell of his friends, and commended himself to Providence.

And if such was the condition of things in the "Delectable Duchy," where, after all, the King's writ ran, and which had at least some form of municipal and Parliamentary Government, what shall we say about Scilly, more than thirty miles away in the Atlantic, and left to the tender mercies of an absentee landlord, who knew little, and probably cared less, for the wants and necessities of his far-distant tenantry. It seems quite clear from the very nature of the case, that the ducal House of the Godolphins could exercise no supervision, and take but a passing interest, in the welfare of so remote and isolated a dependency. Indeed, it is on record that the place was very much neglected. The lessees employed an agent, or factor, to collect the rents, but beyond this they never lifted a finger towards developing the property, or assisting the Islanders in their difficulties.

Far on into the eighteenth century the condition of the Islands was deplorable. The people tilled their potato patches, gathered a scanty harvest of barley and rye—which was their principal food—did a little fishing, salted and dried their catches in the sun (which was then called

"buckhorn") converted some of the seaweed into kelp, tended their few sheep and pigs, and if, perchance, anybody owned a cow, she was "roped" to a stake so that she should not too soon exhaust the limited pasturage. It used to be said that the Scillonians killed a half a sheep at a time, and cured their bacon standing, rubbing the salt into one particular spot, and cutting their rasher as they required it.

Now, I do not suppose that they ever performed this anatomical feat; but, at all events, within my recollection, the inhabitants always held an inquest on the animal before the sacrificial knife had done its work, one of the jurors taking a leg, another a loin, and a third a breast, until the whole carcass had been disposed of. There was no market for butcher's meat, and it would never do to kill the pig and have most of it left on their hands.

Speaking of pigs reminds me of rather an amusing practical joke in which I acted as one of the *dramatis personæ*. It occurred at Scilly many years ago, before, in my case, the exuberance of youth had been softened and mellowed by the chastening hand of time. There was then only one hotel of any pretensions on the Islands, known as "Tregarthen's Hotel," and kept by a Captain Frank Tregarthen. Captains are as plentiful in Cornwall as Counts are in Germany. Anybody who has commanded a sloop, or been underground agent in a mine, is styled "Captain," and in Cornish towns and villages one cannot turn a corner without bumping up against a captain of more or less importance.

"Cappen Frank," as he was familiarly called, was known far and wide as a genial, obliging host, as were also his bevy of pretty daughters for their attention and solicitude for the comfort of their visitors. Like a true son of Scilly, Captain Frank hated waste, and as there was always plenty of offal knocking about the hotel he kept a pig. It was one of the lop-eared, long-sided, white varieties, well known from Waterford to Tipperary for their fattening qualities, and for the superior brand of bacon they produce. With a thoroughness born of his sea-training, Captain Frank took great delight in this pig, and devoted much attention to its housing and feeding. It was scrubbed every morning with Mill Bay soap, and massaged until its skin shone like a piece of pink coral, and its coat

CAPTAIN FRANK TREGARTHEN.

was as fine as silk. As he leant over the sty smoking his matutinal pipe, Captain Frank was wont to speculate on the dead weight of his protege when fit for the butcher, and to indulge in similar reflections to the Irishman, who opined that if we were all as fit to die as "the gintleman that paid the rint," what a blessing it would be!

On this particular occasion, in addition to the writer, two others from Penzance were stopping at the Hotel, and I am afraid the old adage that the devil always finds work for idle hands was strikingly exemplified. It was deadly dull: there was not as much as a bagatelle-board in the place, and as for cards the ghosts of Mrs. Tregarthen's pious ancestors would have risen in rebellion at the mere suggestion of such a thing. So, looking around for something to kill time, we cast longing eyes on Captain Frank's pig as the ground-work for a lark. The idea was to play off a joke upon the landlord, but alas! it was carried too far, and ended in a tragedy.

We three conspirators went down to Jackson's—the only store-keeper on the Island—and provided ourselves with several bottles of Jutson's dyes. Then, when everybody else had retired to rest, we crept out into the yard, roused up Mister Piggie, and rubbed-in a broad band of purple from the tip of his nose to the root of his tail; drew two similar stripes down the fore-legs, and a big patch of scarlet across his stern: rings of the same colour surrounded his eyes. The pig looked for all the world like some rare specimen of the zebra tribe, though not quite so leggy. Next morning, as usual, Captain Frank was up betimes to give his pet the customary grooming, when, horror of horrors! he discovered that, during the night, the pig had developed some mysterious disease, and was evidently mortifying. Consternation reigned throughout the household, and after the "Missus" had been called and the girls roused up, it was resolved in solemn family conclave to kill the pig to save his bacon. One was despatched for Uncle Tom Woodcock the executioner; another fired up the boiler to provide water for the scalding; and a third hastened to get the rope necessary to suspend the carcass before *rigor mortis* set in. And at length, when the last squeal had rent the air, and the pig had rendered up the ghost, and a post-mortem examination disclosed the fact that the discoloura-

tion was only skin-deep, and that a career which gave promise of culminating in sixteen score of good, honest pork, had been cut prematurely short, great were the lamentations. Captain Frank never forgave the perpetrators of the crime, and to his dying day, it was always a very sore point to remind him of the fate of his favourite porker.

There is little doubt, I think, that environment has much to do with moulding the character of a people. Men and women are apt to be very much the creatures of circumstances. It is true, I believe, in the case of a full-blooded Scotsman emigrating to the United States, that in less than three generations his descendants become lean and lanky Yankees, with sallow complexion, lantern jaws, and goatee beard, who drawl out their speech, and "guess," and "calculate," with all the fervour of a native-born American. The Swiss mountaineer imbibes his love of freedom with the very air he breathes; the Turk is a fatalist because he is too lazy to think and act for himself, and the Dutch are stolid and phlegmatic by reason of their surroundings.

And, applying this rule to ourselves, it is more than doubtful whether we should be what we are to-day, but for the fact that we have had to wrestle with Nature, and, as it were, to wrest her bounties from her at the point of the bayonet. The coal and the iron, the copper and the tin, the mineral wealth which assists so largely in building up our greatness as a nation, have had to be won by the strength of our arm, and the sweat of our brow. The rivers we have harnessed to our commerce from the Mersey to the Humber, and from the Tamar to the Clyde, have been brought under subjection at the expense of infinite toil and trouble. The acres of Docks for the accommodation of our shipping, and the miles of wharves and warehouses for landing and storing our merchandise, have been hewn out of the rock, or reclaimed from the swamp; and, but for these obstacles, which we have had to grapple with and overcome, who knows but what we might not be as inert, nerveless, and effete, as some of the decaying nations living under sunnier skies, who have only to tickle the ground with a hoe for it to laugh with a harvest.

Such was the condition of the Scillonians. Cabined, cribbed, and confined within the four corners of their sea-girt home, and cut off from all intercourse with the rest of the world, they had to rely entirely on their own efforts to

supply their every-day wants, and what they could not wring from the impoverished soil, or win from the sea, they had to do without. The struggle hardened their fibre, and knit both nerve and muscle for the conflict. They became courageous, self-reliant, and combative, fighting for dear life as a Laplander fights for his blubber and his venison. No danger was too great, no peril too extreme to deter them from putting to sea when humanity called, or there was a prospect of their winning a reward for some service rendered to a ship in distress.

Most people have observed that certain names are indigenous to certain places, and cling to certain localities. To say nothing of Generic names having their origin deep down in the history of nations, races, and tribes, there are others which smack of their native soil, and partake of their own local surroundings. In Cornwall, for instance, a large proportion of surnames have the prefix of "Tre," "Pol," or "Pen," like "Trevennen," "Polwhele," "Pendarves," and so on. In Wales, another branch of the Celtic family, the prevalence of such names as "Griffiths," "Morgan," "Davis," and "Evans," is too well known to be commented on. Again, we find that in some districts the Smiths predominate, in others the Browns, and somewhere else the Robinsons. They appear to sort themselves up, and to flourish in certain well-defined areas, just as animals have their own peculiar haunts and habitat.

In Scilly, this narrow nomenclature, and the herding together of certain families is very pronounced. Tresco and St. Martins are almost entirely inhabited by Ashfords, Jenkins, and Penders. At St. Agnes the name of Hicks prevails, and in St. Marys they are nearly all Tregarthens, Edwardses, Banfields, Bluets, and Gibsons. If one could only trace their genealogical tree back to its roots, it would be found that nine-tenths of the Islanders are connected, directly or indirectly, with these leading families. The cause of this restriction is very obvious. For generations, families of the same name and blood have inter-married, owing to the field of choice being limited; and unless a "foreigner" bearing a strange patronymic should happen to settle down at Scilly, there is no getting away from the constant repetition of the same family name.

Scilly is one of the worst places in the world a stranger can dare talk scandal in. If he hazards the remark that

Mr. A. is a miserable old curmudgeon who has broken all the laws in the Decalogue, the chances are that he (Mr. A.) is uncle or cousin to the person he is addressing. If he speaks of Mrs. B. as a backbiting old cat who minds everybody's business but her own, it will turn out that she is aunt, or mother-in-law, to the select circle to whom he is confiding the information. If he insinuates that Mr. C. is a sot who never crooks his elbow unless his mouth opens, and that his rubicund visage is not the result of imbibing water gruel, the very next time he meets Mr. C. he will be taken to task as to what he means by telling all his relations of his little weaknesses, and will make an enemy of him for life. Or if he hints, darkly, that Miss D. is no better than she should be, and that her recent absence from the Islands was not altogether unconnected with certain returns published periodically by the Registrar-General, he will put his head into a hornet's nest, for the frail damsel is almost sure to be connected by blood or marriage with two-thirds of the female population, and they will turn and rend him.

It must not be inferred from anything that I have said in the foregoing paragraph that the Scillonians are endowed with a double dose of original sin, or that they are anything more than a fair sample of fallen humanity thrown together under certain conditions. They have their weaknesses and their foibles as we all have, but, making allowance for the peculiar circumstances in which they are placed, they are probably no better or no worse than other people. That they are sober, honest, and truthful, I can testify; and in every other relation of life they are rather an example to be followed, than a beacon to be shunned. So far as I am aware, no Scillonian has ever figured in the Divorce Court, and if during the period of courtship a mistake occurs—as they will in the best regulated families—it is always the parson, and not the magistrate, who is called in to adjudicate.

In this respect the Scillonians are in marked contrast to the inhabitants on the mainland. Cornwall, next to Scotland, carries off the palm for a high percentage of illegitimacy, the mining districts, and many of the fishing villages around the coast being the greatest sinners. A story is told of a clergyman who came into the County from the Midlands to take up a living in a certain fishery town which used to send a member to Parlia-

ment. He was so shocked at the evident condition of many of the ladies coming to the altar to be joined in holy matrimony, that he resolved to offer a Church Service as a prize to the very first woman whose virtue, to all appearances, was beyond question. But such was the state of morals in the parish that, for some considerable time, the prize remained unappropriated. At last, however, a couple presented themselves with the bride looking so demure, so modest, and so slim withal, that the parson thought, ah! here is the pearl without price; here is the *rara avis* I have been searching for for so long, and, accordingly, in a neat little speech, he handed her the prize as the reward of her chastity. But alas for virtue, and alas for truth! Alas for parson, and alas for maid! It turned out that the blushing bride had only just recovered from child-birth, and was taking the earliest opportunity of being made an honest woman.

Leading a life of primitive seclusion "far from the madding crowd," the Scillonians recked not of the great world around them, with all its pitfalls and its snares, its tinsel and its glitter, its shams and its make-believes. Men bought and sold, married and were given in marriage, battles were lost and won, dynasties rose and fell without disturbing their rest or exciting their curiosity. For all the interest they took in such mundane affairs they might just as well have been dwellers on Tristan da Cuhna. It is said that Queen Elizabeth had ascended the throne several months before the news reached Scilly, and they did not know the result of the Battle of Waterloo for some time afterwards. The Islanders increased and multiplied as the *genus homo* will under favourable conditions, where the men lead healthy, outdoor lives, and the women nurse their offspring.

Not like their sisters of the present day who, in too many cases, look upon the duties of maternity as a bore; as something which curtails their liberty, interferes with their pleasure, and spoils their figure. They think it is better to shine in the ball-room than to reign in the nursery. So it has become fashionable to "restrict" the number of children, and to look upon a large family as something like a disgrace. This trifling with the laws of natural increase is having a most serious effect on the future of the human race. The birth-rate is falling

rapidly, and must soon reach a point when the waste of life will be in excess of its recuperative capacity. France affords a striking object-lesson of the folly of this hateful system. Her population is not only stationary, but absolutely decaying, and it seems merely a question of time when the French as a nation will be wiped out.

Instead of looking upon children as "God's greatest gift," and the duties of motherhood as outweighing every other claim on their time and attention, women of nearly every class nowaday hand their children over to hirelings, who, naturally, take just as much interest in other people's progeny —love is quite out of the question—as the farmer bestows on one of his stray lambs. Both are deprived of their natural sustenance; both are dependent upon that abomination the feeding-bottle; and both are beaten off and thrust aside as soon as they are able to shift for themselves. Is it any wonder that infant mortality has attained such frightful proportions; that the rising generation are a nervous, rickety, strumous, flat-chested lot, or that it is necessary to appoint Royal Commissions to try and arrest national decay? Some German professor has calculated that, in another hundred years, the greater part of the human family will be blind, bald, and toothless; and he attributes this shocking deterioration to the unhealthy conditions under which we live, to the disregard of the laws of sanitation and hygiene, and, above all, to rearing the young artificially on cow's milk (when they can get it) but more generally, on certain preparations largely composed of gluten and starch. Or in many cases feeding the poor little wretches on stuff enough to upset the digestion of an ostrich.*

Well, at all events, the Scillonians did not suffer from this curse of over civilisation. Natural causes produced natural results. Blessed was the man who had his quiver full. The men were strong and virile, and the women, like all other mammals, suckled their young. They married early, and the children sprawled on the beach, or wandered

* I once sat beside a woman on the Saltash steamer who was nursing a fine healthy looking baby, some six or nine months old. She was eating "winkles,' picking them out with a pin; and for every one she took herself she gave one to the baby, who kicked and crowed as if the leathery comestible was sugar candy. On my remonstrating with her, she said: "Lor t'want 'urt 'un, he do always have part of what us do ate ourselves." Probably, the child died of convulsions, but what matter?

over the sand-dunes, and thus grew up hardy, lusty, and vigorous. Instead of absolute barrenness, or families stopping short at twos and threes as in these degenerate days, they ran into baker's dozens, and even higher up into the teens. On a small scale, it was what Mr. Leonard Courtney (now Lord Courtney of Penwith) has called the "swarming of man," and as they clustered round the family roof-tree, or bubbled over into the limited space available, the evils of over-population began to manifest themselves: the potato-plot grew smaller and smaller, and there was not enough "buckhorn" to go round. In short, the Islanders were little better off than the peasantry in the South of Ireland, who, if we are to believe Mr. John Redmond, even now are on the verge of starvation.

Seeing that everything around them was instinct with change, and the world throbbing and palpitating with new life and energy, it was not to be expected that the Scillonians would be content to remain stranded and derelict. Insignificant as they were in point of numbers, they rightly claimed to be a part of the body politic, and entitled to share in the great upheaval which marked the close of the eighteenth century. Light had brooded over the dark waters, and men were awakening to new ideals, and a sense of better things. It was beginning to be realised that the great round globe we inhabit and all that is in it, was not, after all, framed and created for the sole use and benefit of the high and the mighty, the sloths and the drones. People made of common clay claimed the right to share in the bounties of Providence without being hectored over and dragooned like so many cattle in a pen. We were on the eve of a great social revival. The French Revolution had stirred society to its depths. The divinity that doth hedge a king had been rudely shaken, and monarchies tottered to their fall. "The Little Corporal" had swept like a firebrand across the land, crumpling up Italy, Austria, and Prussia, over-running the Low Countries, and thundering at the Gates of Russia. Spain had felt the weight of his hand, and thrones toppled over like nine-pins. All the Continent of Europe was being thrown into the melting-pot, and no one could say what would emerge from the cauldron. Then came the struggle in the Peninsula, the overthrow at Waterloo, and the exile to St. Helena.

CHAPTER X.

The Advent of Mr. Augustus Smith.

ALL this had passed into history, and we were just recovering from the effects of a long and devastating war, when one fine day in the year 1834, without any warning, there dropped down out of the clouds, or rather arrived by a boat specially freighted to bring him across, the Saviour of Scilly in the person of the late Mr. Augustus Smith. I have been assured by many of the last generation of Scillonians that they quite expected him. It had been foretold that a new landlord would appear, who would reside amongst them, and be the means of regenerating the Islands, for so many years under the ban of absenteeism. It was understood that Mr. Smith had been engaged in the management of some estates in Ireland, and was therefore not unused to dealing with a tenantry which had felt the pinch of poverty, and were, at times, inclined to be somewhat obstreperous.

To say that Mr. Smith was received with open arms would be to do violence to the truth. The people had been left too long to their own devices, paying a small rack-rent to the ground landlord, breeding, as the agriculturists say, "in and in," squatting on the land almost like gipsies, living on rye bread and "buckhorn," cutting bracken for fuel in the autumn, and trusting to an occasional wreck cast up by the sea, to take kindly to a new master who, as they soon discovered, was determined to play the part of the proverbial new broom.

Mr. Smith soon found that the pruning-hook would have to be applied with no unsparing hand to the many abuses which had crept in during the reign of his predecessors. The first thing to be done was to weed out the surplus population, which had become congested through the stay-at-home proclivities of the younger generation. They wanted more elbow-room. Not that there was anything like overcrowding in the ordinary acceptation of the term. With a population all told of a little over 2,000 souls,

MR. AUGUSTUS SMITH.

(the exact figures according to the last census were 2,092) spread over an area of some 4,000 acres, there was ample breathing space to satisfy the requirements of the most rigid disciple of sanitation and hygiene. But, the fact is, the place is incapable of supporting more than a given number of people, and if these limits are exceeded poverty and privation ensue. The land, for the most part, runs into downs, sand-hills, and salt-marshes, and what is left requires to be liberally manured to yield any return for the labour bestowed on it. The principal fertiliser is seaweed, of which there is an unlimited quantity, with an occasional dash of artificials to stimulate the latent properties of the soil. The seaweed is applied green, in the form of a top-dressing, or rotted down into compost heaps mixed with lug-sand and stable litter. The main crops are barley, oats, and rye, (wheat cannot be cultivated) with a rotation of mangolds, turnips, and potatoes. Grasses like trefoil and clover do well, but there is no such thing as permanent pasture. Stock is never housed, but kept out in the open all the year round.

To relieve the congestion, Mr. Smith drafted the boys off to sea, and sent the girls across to the mainland as shop-assistants, or domestic servants. The men were set to work to improve their holdings, and the women taught habits of thrift and industry. New roads were laid out, and the Pier lengthened, and made safer for boats and shipping to come alongside to discharge their freight. Every man who kept a boat had to pay a licence, and Mr. Smith used all the influence he could exert with the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House to get Scilly made a pilot-station, so that ships might be induced to use it as a port of call.

Highly necessary as all this was in the interests of the Islanders themselves, it was not accomplished without a great deal of opposition. The Scillonians are as clannish as the Scots, and cling to their sea-girt home with all the tenacity of Highlanders or Swiss Mountaineers. Even now, when they are scattered over the four quarters of the globe, and in various capacities sail over every sea, there is no place like Scilly. Many Scillonians hold good positions in the Midlands and the great metropolis, but at such time as Christmas, nothing deters them from "going home." They will travel hundreds of miles, and brave the risks and dis-

comforts of a winter passage to be with the old people. Indeed, there is something in the soil of the West Country which acts as a loadstone to her children. The Cornish are one of the most migratory races on the face of the earth. They may be found on the slopes of the Andes, under the shadow of the Rockies, on the burning plains of India, the vast, rolling prairies of Manitoba, ranching in Argentina, or prospecting for diamonds and gold on the South African veldt; but wherever they are, they never forget the land of their birth—the land of saffron cake and clotted cream.

And, by the bye, this saffron cake must not be confounded with "heavy cake," which is made entirely of cream, flour, and currants, in which saffron is never used. "Heavy Cake"—so called from the fact that no yeast is employed—is a different thing altogether. The ingredients are mixed in a bowl, flattened out with a rolling-pin, and cooked under the "baker." To the uninitiated, it may be explained that this "baker" is a shallow iron vessel, something like a stew-pan. The "baker," inverted, is placed on the stone hearth, and piled up with turves or faggots of furze. These are set alight, and as soon as the "baker" is well hot, the embers are swept away, and the cake placed on the "slab." The burning embers are again raked together over the "baker," and in about twenty minutes the cake is ready to serve. Gourmands say that the depth of gastronomic dainties have not been sounded until one has partaken of Cornish "Heavy Cake."

Mr. Smith had acquired the remainder of the lease of the Islands from the representatives of the Duke of Leeds, and, as we have seen, had come down to take possession of the property. On a much smaller scale of course, and only to a very limited extent, Mr. Smith was another Cecil Rhodes. Both were leaders of men; both were pioneers and reformers, and both died with their hand on the tiller-rope. But here, I am afraid, the comparison ends. Cecil Rhodes went forth to conquer and annex a very considerable slice of the African Continent, and to lay the foundations of an Empire, destined some day, to stretch from the Cape to Cairo, and from Mozambique to the Zambesi. Mr. Smith's field of operations was confined to the small group of Islands on the Atlantic sea-board, containing altogether little more cultivable ground than a single South African farm. With Mr. Smith the problem was how to find land

for the population ; with Cecil Rhodes how to bring population to the land. In Scilly, every inch of soil that could be coaxed or cozened into bearing, was made the most of ; on the spreading uplands of Rhodesia there are vast tracts which have never known the plough ; millions of acres only waiting the spade of the husbandman to blossom into plenty and to laugh with fatness.

It is this "cussedness" of matter, this intractability of mundane things, which baffles the statesman, and confounds the philanthropist. Here are we cooped up on this "tight little Island," jostling and crowding each other, fighting for dear life and a bare existence, with want stalking abroad, hungry battalions clamouring to be fed, and anarchy sitting on the throttle-valve, whilst in Sunny Africa, under the Southern Cross, and in the unappropriated territories of North America, there is enough land and to spare to support ten times the population.

It has already been said that Scilly was over-populated, and that it was necessary to deport some of the younger generation to make room, and to allow for the fecundity of the race, which increased at a greater rate than the Islands could absorb. Until this was done Scilly was always more or less in a state of chronic destitution. There were more pegs than there were holes, and, like the odd one in a litter of pigs, (called in Cornwall a "piggywidden") someone was bound to be crowded out. There was not enough employment to keep the people in decency and comfort. The men loafed about the quay waiting for something to turn up, and, with the exception of Hugh Town, where there were a few stone-built houses, the women and children were mostly housed in shanties little better than the mud-cabins in Connemara.

There are all sorts of ways of getting a living. I once knew an old man at Scilly who used to perambulate the shore every morning before daylight, on the look-out for any flotsam or jetsam that might have been cast up during the night. He searched the pools among the rocks, and prodded the piles of sea-weed with his stick. There is always a certain amount of waste left by the receding tide, which is strewn in ridges along the beach below high-water mark; and this was carefully overhauled for any unconsidered trifles, such as a pocket-book, or a jewel-case, which might have floated in. He also scanned the offing anxiously

for any foreign substance likely to drift his way, or which could be marked down for future operations. It was a gruesome sort of calling, and one can imagine that many of the things he saw were not pleasant to look upon. Maybe it was a dead body washing about in the surf, or some other sad memento of a wreck in the shape of a seaman's chest, a locker from the captain's cabin, or a tangled mass of knotted cordage, battered sails, and broken spars. Perhaps it was a raft to which had clung despairingly the last survivors of the hapless crew, till, dropping off one by one, they had gone to swell that great army which the sea claims as a tribute, from Greenland to Cathay. But whatever it was, all was fair game to him. He set to work with the keenness of a detective and the skill of a surgeon making a post-mortem examination. Everything was turned over and carefully searched. He had imbibed some strange notions of *meum* and *tuum*, of mine and yours, and although it was his duty to hand over any property he might find to the Receiver of Wreck, and wait the salvage award, I am afraid it was expecting too much for him to do this, in the case of any portable goods which could be appropriated without fear of detection.

No one ever knew exactly the extent of the man's finds, as, for very good reasons, he was very reluctant to enlarge on the subject; but it was generally supposed that an occasional haul of floating wreckage, or the discovery of a dead body with valuables on it, made it worth his while. After the wreck of the Schiller many people in the neighbourhood became suddenly rich, and there is little doubt that the bodies of some of the victims were stripped and thrown back into the sea, for the sake of what was found on them. One man at Penzance blossomed out into a carriage and pair on the strength of it, and it was believed that his dealings with the wreckers amounted to many thousands of pounds.

During the years of the Irish famine due to the failure of the potato crop, Scilly was in a sorry plight, and it was only by prompt assistance that the Islanders were kept from actual want. Matters, indeed, would have been much worse, but for the striking difference in the character and temperament of the two races. An Irishman is a born beggar, and with a glib tongue, and plenty of blarney, would wheedle a penny out of the fob of an Egyptian

mummy ; whilst a Cornishman, and especially a Scillonian, sturdily independent, and inured to the pinch of poverty, would rather die by the hedge than ask for alms, or accept charity in any form. Scilly forms part of the Penzance Union, and is under the Poor Law administration, but it is a very rare thing for a Scillonian to enter the poor-house, or to be thrown upon the rates.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Smith's Influence: His Absolute Authority.—Wrecks and Wrecking.

MR. SMITH was to Scilly what the Czar is to Russia—he was an autocrat. It is true, the iron hand was hidden under the silken glove, but, nevertheless, there was the hand, and it knew how to strike when occasion demanded. Not that Mr. Smith was by any means a tyrant. On the contrary, all his dealings with his tenantry were conceived in a most liberal spirit, and he was respected and beloved by every man on the Islands. There were times, however, when the exercise of some authority was needful, and when the necessity arose, Mr. Smith might be trusted always to temper justice with mercy.

I need hardly say that Mr. Smith had no jurisdiction over the lives and liberties of his subjects other than was conferred upon him as a County Magistrate. The strong arm of the law was just as effective in Scilly as in any other part of His Majesty's dominions. But in all things appertaining to the government of the Islands, his rule was absolute, and his word the law. He might truly say :—"I am monarch of all I survey, my right there is none to dispute." To oppose "The Governor," as Mr. Smith was called, spelt ostracism and deportation ; the man or woman became a pariah ; no one dared to shelter them or to give them a meal's meat, and thus a decree of banishment was just as effectual as the ukase of the Czar sentencing some unhappy Pole or Finn to the Steppes of Siberia.

The only two men I ever knew to really take off their coats and stand up against Mr. Smith, were Mr. William Douglass, father of Sir James Douglass who designed and built the present Eddystone Lighthouse, and a Mr. Thomas Johns Buxton, a shipping agent. Mr. Douglass was employed under the Trinity House to superintend the erection of the Bishops Lighthouse, at that time thought to be a very wonderful undertaking. He was a big, burly, hard-headed Northumbrian, and got at logger-heads with Mr.

HORATIO NELSON, THE ONE-MAN POLICE FORCE.

Smith on the question of quarrying some stone. There was some dispute as to whether the Trinity House authorities were entitled to raise stone for the purpose of building the Lighthouse, or whether they should pay a royalty to Mr. Smith. The battle raged fast and furious. Mr. Douglass shook his fist—about the size of a leg of mutton—at Mr. Smith, and said "He'd be domned" if anybody should interfere with his work; whilst Mr. Smith, equally bellicose, insisted that the stone was his, and that not a rag of it should be touched until his terms had been complied with. I forget now how the affair ended, but I fancy Mr. Douglass carried his point.

Mr. Buxton was one of those men—we have all met with them—who are never happy unless they are miserable, and who go about rolled up the wrong way like so many human porcupines. A quarrel or a law suit was like the breath of his nostrils, and he scented a row as a warhorse sniffs powder. Mr. Buxton was one of the few on the Islands who held a lease direct from the Duchy, and thus, to some extent, was independent of Mr. Smith. He proposed to erect a store in the rear of his premises to meet his business requirements without the consent of the Governor. The store was built, but the resources of civilization were not exhausted. The ground was Mr. Buxton's, and he had the right to put up any structure he chose, but the road which led to the store, and which was the only approach, was Mr. Smith's, and without more to-do he erected a fence several feet high right across the road, and effectually walled Mr. Buxton in. Mr. Smith was a nasty customer to tackle when his blood was up. It will be remembered that, on another occasion, he freighted a special train with navvies, and took them down somewhere into Hertfordshire to demolish a fence which the late Earl Brownlow had put up in defiance of public rights.

The spiritual needs of the Scillionians are provided for by Mr. Smith, who maintains a clergyman at St. Marys, and, of late years, also at Tresco, St. Martins, and St. Agnes. One never cares to throw cold water on any religious effort however misdirected or ill-judged; but it does seem a waste of energy, and something like breaking a butterfly on a wheel, to keep these highly-trained men cooped up on three or four small Islands, containing altogether less than one-third of the population of an

ordinary-sized parish, whilst on the mainland, there are so many plague-spots wallowing in moral and physical destitution. This applies more particularly to Scilly, where, for the most part, the people are dissenters, and support their own ministers. In the case of the Off Islands which are beyond the reach of ministerial supervision, the people hold their meetings in some little improvised conventicle, to the hoarse diapason of the storm.

Probably, a more sober, orderly, God-fearing race than the Scillonians does not exist. Crime in any form is almost unknown. At times, no doubt, there may be a few minor offences which are dealt with by the local bench; but I never remember a Scillonian being committed to the Assizes, or suffering a long term of imprisonment. The one solitary policeman, rejoicing in the historic name of Horatio Nelson, combined the offices of Town Crier, Grave-digger, Beadle and Parish Clerk, and, rank pluralist as he was, his post as Guardian of the Peace was a sinecure.

There is only one thing that stirs the blood or quickens the pulse of the Scillonian, and that is a wreck. He sees, as I have often seen, the storm-tossed ship battling with the waves. Suddenly, out of the mist looms a frowning headland, and the sound of breakers grates upon the ear. What is her position? Has she struck the dreaded Scillies, or, failing to weather the Lizard, is she caught in the toils of Mount's Bay? There is no time to think: minutes are freighted with human lives, and to hesitate is to be lost. "All hands 'bout ship!" rings out sharp and clear from the quarter-deck, and the crew spring to the braces; ropes rattle through the blocks, clew-lines are let go, and the yards hauled well aft. The tattered sails flutter for a moment in the wind, and at this crisis, the fate of everybody on board hangs in the balance. If the ship answers her helm and pays off on the other tack, all may yet be well, and the startling experience serve but to garnish a fo'castle yarn.

But if she misses stays, as alas! she often does, her doom is sealed. Flares are burnt, rockets fired, an anchor let go, and chain veered out to the very last shackle to try and arrest her course shoreward, but all of no avail. The anchor drags, and there is no reply to her signals. One by one the masts go over the side, carrying with them all standing and running rigging. The decks are swept by

A WRECK AT SCILLY.

every sea, and the battered hull, lying broadside on to the shore, is but a target for the elements. To attempt to launch a boat under such circumstances would be to invite instant destruction, and the only chance for the crew is to cling to the wreck while a single plank remains. Taking shelter under the shattered bulwarks, or lashed to the stump of a spar, all through the long hours of the night they battle with their fate, and when the morning dawns—a hopeless dawn for them—they see all around only the beetling cliffs and waste of broken water.

Perchance, at this juncture, a farmer anxious for the safety of his flock, sallies forth in the teeth of the gale to round up his beeves, and count heads among his scattered ewes. From some rocky spur which commands a view of the coast, he looks down on the seething, foaming breakers, girdling the shore for miles; and there, as in the centre of a maelstrom, he spies the luckless ship. Alas! he is only too familiar with such scenes, and needs no incentive to urge him to immediate action. Hailing the benumbed and exhausted crew, he bids them be of good cheer as help is at hand, and starts off on his errand of mercy. In an incredibly short space of time he has raised the whole countryside, and from every village and hamlet far and near people flock to the spot. If a rocket apparatus is available it is promptly brought into use, and, if possible, communication established between the shore and the ship; the breeches is rigged, and, guided by willing hands, the crew, or such portion that remain, are hauled to land. Failing any other means, rafts are floated out, and men forming a chain wade to their arm-pits through the boiling surf, at the risk of their lives. Nothing that skill and ingenuity can suggest, or experience devise, is left undone, and if, happily, their labour is rewarded by the rescue of the crew, the ship-wrecked men are nursed back to health and strength with tender solicitude.

Such incidents as these were painfully frequent around the Cornish coast about thirty or forty years ago. I myself have seen as many as twelve wrecks strewn along the shores of Mount's Bay after a south-east gale. From Bude to Cape Cornwall, and from the Lizard to the Rame, there was scarcely a spot without its record of disaster. Either the doomed craft, beating down the Bristol Channel in the teeth of a north-wester, failed to weather Trevose, and was

driven ashore in Widemouth Bay, or on the Doom Bar at Padstow; or escaping this danger, came to grief lower down, before she could double the Land's End.

Most of the wrecks in Mount's Bay were due to homeward-bound ships being unable to weather the Lizard. Hammering her way up channel close-hauled, in an easterly gale, the first intimation a vessel had that she was too far to leeward, was the loom of the land, somewhere between Cudden Point and the Old Lizard Head. If she had time to go about, and could luff-up sharp enough to take her clear of the Stags, all might yet be well; but, in too many cases, she was fatally embayed, and drifted on to the cliffs, which towered above her hundreds of feet high. The ribs of many a vessel, bleaching on Praa Sands, and Marazion Green, afford sad evidence of the deadliness of this coast; even as the memorials in the village churchyards round about bear witness that these wrecks were frequently accompanied by a lamentable loss of life.

At Scilly, before the old sailing-ship had been driven off the sea, and her place taken by a sort of iron chest with a bunch of machinery inside, as much like the ship of our forefathers as the modern tramcar is like the old stage coach,wrecks were of frequent occurrence. Standing off and on to cheat the tide, or venturing too near the fatal ledges, a vessel ran into danger before she was aware of her proximity to the land. And, once in the clutches of these deadly reefs, nothing short of a miraculous interposition of Providence could save her from destruction.

Speaking of wrecks, reminds me of rather a singular occurrence which happened at Scilly many years ago, and the truth of which can be vouched for from the local records. It had been blowing a whole gale from the westward, but the wind had gone down, and, as usual under these conditions, a very heavy sea was running. It was Sunday morning, and the people, according to their wont, had wended their way to the various places of worship, leaving the place as gloomy as a cloister, and as silent as a trappist cell. Not a sound was heard save the dull roar of the breakers, and the booming of the surf on Porthellick and Porthcressa Beach. They were in the middle of the service at the Parish Church, when a man put his head inside the door, and, in an excited manner, bawled out at the top of his voice, "A wreck!"

The words ran through the congregation like an electric shock, and rising to their feet as one man, they exclaimed: "The Lord be praised! Where ess she?"

"Down to Por'cressa," said the man; "a Frenchman." Now, the Scillonians are almost as rigidly Sabbatarian as the Scotch, and where church or chapel going is concerned it is difficult to get them to do any manner of work on Sunday. Dressed in their best, and looking as devout as quakers at a funeral, they keep the day strictly as a day of rest. But the line must be drawn somewhere, and the limit is reached when a wreck occurs. So when the native broke in on their devotions in this way, it was a case of *sauve qui peut*, and the devil take the hindmost. They did not stand on the order of going, but bundling out helter-skelter, fell over each other in their eagerness to be first on the spot.

While this little scene was being enacted in the body of the Church, the parson had taken in the situation at a glance. His stipend was small, and he had been long without "a call" to a better living; so that he was not above sharing in any little pickings Providence might send in his way. He had reached the second head of his sermon, and was about to enlarge on the "thirdly and lastly" stage, when this unseemly disturbance took place, and the electrifying words "A wreck!" fell upon his ears. Fearful lest he should be left, and yet not wishing to betray any undue haste, he abruptly finished his discourse, closed the Book with a bang, and with a hurried "And now to God the Father," etc., flung aside his surplice, and clearing the pulpit steps at a bound said: "Now, my dear friends, pray don't be in such a hurry: let us all start fair."

When they reached Porthcressa, which is a sandy cove at the back of Hugh Town, there, sure enough, was a French lugger bottom up. She had struck almost at high water, the sea was making a clean breach over her, and there were no signs of the crew. Nothing was to be gained by making a fuss at this stage of the proceedings, so they returned to the Church, finished the service, and no doubt offered up a prayer to the Great Giver of all good that He had been pleased to send such a windfall their way. As the tide ebbed it left the lugger high and dry, and all Scilly was at Porthcressa discussing the pros and cons of the wreck, and speculating on the nature of the find. What

was her cargo? Was it fruit, was it wine, or, worst of all luck, was it pitwood? The latter was a poor affair, and hardly worth salving. However, to solve the matter, one man more practical than the rest, got his tools and prized open a seam. Pitwood it was, and putting in his arm to grope for any more inviting items of the freight, he was staggered, and frightened almost out of his wits, to find his hand grasped by another hand, and to hear the sound of voices from within the ship. This was a revelation, as to all appearances she was entirely derelict, and outwardly gave no sign of containing a living soul.

When they had recovered from their surprise and astonishment at this strange phenomenon, they set to work with a will, and by removing some of the planking, were able to release several men, the survivors of the ill-fated crew. The history of the case was this:—When the lugger was caught in the gale and dismasted, she "turned turtle" so suddenly, that those who were below had no time to escape, and the imprisoned air preventing the water from rising in the interior of the ship, she was converted into a sort of diving-bell, and in this miraculous manner the shipwrecked crew were cast up on Porthcressa Beach this Sabbath morning.

CHAPTER XII.

The Dangers of Channel Navigation.—Lifeboats.

WITH one of my old Penzance boys, Mr. Thomas Matthews, at the head of the technical branch of the Trinity House, and the wonderful improvement in the power and range of illuminants in recent years, the coasts all round are much better lighted, and there is less excuse for a well-found, carefully navigated ship coming to grief. Take the English Channel for instance. After once picking up the Bishop it is comparatively all plain sailing. There are the mid-channel lights on the Wolf Rock and the Eddystone Shoal, and, in addition, the Longships, the Lizard, Prawle Point, Portland Bill, St. Catherine's and the Downs, each having a distinctive light, and pointing the way to a true Channel course. If there is a gap at all, it is between the Lizard and the Eddystone. The coast here recedes into a series of bays—Whitsand Bay, Gerran's Bay, and Falmouth Bay, and in the bend of the latter, just inside the Black Head, lies the fatal Manacles, protected only by an illuminated buoy.

The Manacles have been the dread of ships standing down Channel ever since the loss of the unfortunate *John*, and nothing effectual has been done as a warning. True, we are told that ships have no business there, that they are out of their course, and so on, but somehow they get there, and scarcely a winter passes without the occurrence of serious wrecks and loss of life. It is purely a question of finance, and seeing that the mercantile marine contributes so largely in the form of light dues, to the upkeep of Trinity House, and that it is virtually a part of the Board of Trade, having all the revenue of the country at its back, surely the erection of a lighthouse at some suitable point is not beyond the means of accomplishment.

Turning to another branch of our life-saving appliances, we rightly set great store on the work done by our lifeboats. Among the many societies which appeal to the public for support, not one, perhaps, renders so good

an account as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. And, be it said, the public respond nobly to the demands made upon them, knowing that the funds will be devoted to the rescue of our sailors in the hour of peril. But we must not forget that lifeboats would be of very little use without crews to man them, and therefore a measure of praise is due to the boatmen around the coast, who in time of storm and stress, are always ready to place their services at the disposal of the Institution, and to go to the assistance of their brothers battling for their lives on some treacherous sand-bank, or clinging to some half-tide rock.

People who tuck themselves up into feather-beds and lie snugly between the sheets, have no idea of the dangers and difficulties of rescue work which goes on year in, and year out, around the exposed coasts of these Islands. Take the North Coast of Cornwall for example. With a north-westerly gale, all the way from Hartland Point to Cape Cornwall is a dead lee shore without a scrap of shelter anywhere. Having passed Lundy (of evil reputation) a ship has to keep at it until she has doubled the Land's End, and got well into the English Channel. In the event of her being disabled and becoming unmanageable, she has great difficulty to keep clear of the cliffs, which, massive and forbidding, frown down upon her from Trevose Head to Hell's Bay, and from Hell's Bay to the Brisons. If she strikes, five lines in the next morning's paper is her only epitaph—lost with all hands the only record which remains.

But nobody can tell where this will happen, and hence the ship has to be followed from point to point, and from headland to headland. The coastguards get out their rocket apparatus, and drag it along inaccessible cliffs, and across wind-swept ravines; the lifeboats at Padstow, Newquay, and St. Ives are warned, and the crews stand at their oars; and yet, after all, perhaps their services are of no avail — the inexorable sea has claimed its victims. Under such circumstances as these, to talk learnedly and hypocritically of whose duty it is to provide a harbour of refuge; to bandy the thing about from the Board of Trade to the Treasury, and from the Treasury back to the Board of Trade, is like trafficking with human lives, and unworthy of a great nation claiming to be foremost in the paths of civilisation and progress.

THE BISHOP'S LIGHTHOUSE, AND RETARRIER LEDGES: DIVERS AT WORK ON WRECK OF "SCHILLER."

A friend and townsman of mine, Sir William Matthews, the eminent engineer, has recently made a very valuable report to the Devon and Cornwall County Councils, in favour of St. Ives as the most eligible site for a harbour of refuge for the Bristol Channel. I am familiar with every inch of the ground, and, speaking as a layman, I should say there can be no question as to the soundness of his conclusions. Lundy is clearly too far up; Padstow is difficult of access, and Newquay an open bay too exposed to afford the necessary shelter. Roughly, St. Ives is protected on every side save the North and West, and with a breakwater shutting in these two points, all the conditions exist for creating a first-class harbour. Then comes the question of ways and means. If the County Councils are deluding themselves with the idea that they can ever carry out such an undertaking, they are living in a fool's paradise. The work is altogether beyond the reach of any local or municipal effort, and unless Parliament is prepared to vote the money for the purpose, it is simply beating the air to attempt to raise it from any other source. Perhaps when another *Montagu* has run her nose against Hartland Point, or gets stranded inside Trevose, we shall stir in the matter, and probably not until then.

It is only of late years that lifeboats have been stationed at Scilly, and I regret to say that for all the good they are they might just as well be on the planet Mars. The danger zone is so extensive, and the points to be reached so scattered and wide apart, that the lifeboat is never likely to be on the exact spot when needed. One boat is stationed at St. Marys, and another at St. Agnes, but what possible use could either of them be to a vessel on shore, say, at the back of St. Martins? To pull the boat to the scene of the wreck in the teeth of an easterly gale, would be quite out of the question, and even if a tug, with her steam up, were available—which she is not—much valuable time would be lost in getting under-weigh. As a matter of fact, during all the years the *Henry Dundas* and the *Charles Deer James* have been stationed at Scilly, I never remember either of them performing a single meritorious service. The wreck was too far away, in too dangerous a position to be approached, or some other cause intervened which prevented the lifeboat from being called into requisition; and on more than one occasion, to my knowledge, the crews have been

reduced to a state of impotency, while within sight of them some tragedy of the sea was being accomplished, involving the sacrifice of many lives.

One never cares to dogmatise on matters beyond one's reach, but to a landsman it seems a sheer waste of force, and a useless drain on the funds of the Society, to keep these two boats rotting at Scilly, when there are so many other places on the mainland where their services might be utilised, crying out for protection. If the capital lying idle, and the subscriptions devoted to the upkeep of the stations, could only be used for joining up the Islands telegraphically, and connecting the outlying Lighthouses and Lightships with the shore, the outlay would be much more beneficial, and the result more adequate to the means employed.

The enforced idleness of the lifeboats, and their failing to be available when their services are required, must not be laid to the charge of Scilly. It would need not two, but twenty boats, to cover the whole field, and then they would not be in the right place at the right time. Nor are the crews to be blamed. Whatever else may be said of them the Scillonians are no cowards. Manning one of their long, six-oar gigs, and trusting to their skill as boatmen, they will fearlessly put to sea when not even a lifeboat would dare show her nose.

It is wonderful what weather these Scilly gigs will stand. I have watched them from the Garrison going off to some ship in distress, almost hull-down to the naked eye. With long, steady sweep, the boat seemed to bridge over the steepest seas, and propelled by six willing arms to walk the water like a thing of life. All depends on how the boat is handled. If kept head to wind and sea, she will ride like a duck, and shake herself free like a dolphin; but once let her broach to, and she is swamped to a certainty. This involves great skill and judgment on the part of the coxswain. In my time, it is more than likely the coxswain would either be Mr. Thomas, who was boarding clerk for Lloyds, or my old friend Alfred Hicks, who acted in a similar capacity for Buxton. Two better men for the work could not possibly be found. From long experience, they could calculate to a nicety the force and impact of each approaching sea, and ease the boat off, or bring her up closer to the wind, as prudence and safety demanded.

The boat's errand was not at all times purely philanthropic. Business also had to be attended to. There was keen competition between the two local firms of shipping agents. Banfields were agents for Lloyds, and proclaimed the fact to all the world. Buxton was French Consul, represented the Glasgow and Liverpool Underwriters, and held several other agencies. The feuds of the Montagues and the Capulets were as nothing to the rivalry between these two houses. Their sole endeavour was to convince shipmasters that Codlin was the man, not Short, and to this end they strained every nerve to be first in the field. The first to board probably got the job. If they could not persuade or cajole the master to come in, as soon as the nature of the cargo, and the name and address of the holders of the bills of lading had been ascertained, by the aid of pigeons which they took off with them for the purpose, they communicated with the shore, and in a few hours, probably, got orders for the ship to proceed to her destination.

But though there was such a scramble for business between these two shipping firms, and they were so eager to outwit each other, dog won't eat dog, and I have heard it said that there was not a pin to choose in their charges. Underwriters have been known to declare that, if a vessel went into Scilly to undergo anything like extensive repairs, it was cheaper to abandon her as a total wreck. I remember a case in point. The barque ————, dismasted away down to the westward had been brought into Scilly by the pilots. Almost before she had dropped anchor, an Admiralty writ was nailed to her stump of a mast in respect to a claim by the salvors, which amounted to £2,000. Then there was a survey to ascertain the extent of the damage, and to assess the cost of the necessary repairs; and as a result, the cargo had to be discharged and warehoused, involving the employment of lighters, etc. And at last, after several months' delay, when the bills were totalled, it was found that the expenditure had swallowed up the entire freight, and exceeded the net value of the ship; and before she got clear away the owners had to give a bottomry bond for several thousand pounds. Of course this could not happen now-a-days. A ship would be promptly towed to a port possessing dock accommodation, and the whole thing done in half the time, and for less than half the money.

And here let me call attention to what on the face of it appears to be a very great anomaly. Any property saved from a wreck is handed over to the custody of the Board of Trade, and paid for according to its value, and the risk incurred in its recovery. Consignees and underwriters are only too glad to reward the salvors. Thus, if a cask of wine, or a baulk of timber, is found knocking about in the Channel, someone is sure to pounce down on it, take it to the nearest Custom House, and the salvage award is assessed with due regard to the merits of the service. But supposing that the very same crew come across a half a dozen starving, shivering wretches clinging to a spar, or adrift on a raft, and by superhuman efforts, they manage to rescue these waifs of poor humanity. What happens? Why they have only their labour for their pains, for, odd as it may seem, no value whatever is attached to the human chattel, which is left to sink or swim as fate or destiny decrees.

In days gone by, we Cornish folk—including the Scillonians—were charged with being little more than wreckers, who thought more of a bale of goods than a life, and who were wont to hang out false signals to lure the mariner to his doom. But, as can abundantly be shewn, this is a libel on the fair name of the County. Many a deed of heroism has been performed around the Cornish Coast which our feather-bed critics would have shirked, and in the case of Scilly, I have many times known men let valuable property drift away and become irrecoverable, to go to the assistance of some hapless wretch buffeted about by wind and tide. One ingot of the specie recovered from the wreck of the Schiller was worth more to the salvors than all the lives they ran such risks to save.

It is difficult to understand why there should be this marked distinction between what is termed "property," and the protection and preservation of human life. Yet it is a distinction which runs through all the Law Courts, and affects the character of the whole of our jurisprudence. Still more inexplicable is the law with respect to the saving of life at sea. I remember a vessel being wrecked at Scilly with a considerable loss of life. Some of the crew, however, were rescued by the Scilly boatmen at great risk, and after superhuman exertions. The men were landed at St. Marys, tenderly cared for, and sent to their homes at the expense

of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society. There was an end of the matter, and the incident passed out of existence as part of the everyday routine. The Scilly boatmen, who had hazarded their lives and imperilled their property in performing the service, were not one copper better off, and never got as much as thanks from either owners or underwriters. The ship was laden mostly with Manchester goods, and lay in too exposed and dangerous a position for any salvage operations to be attempted. But in the course of time, as the ship broke up, bales of prints, calicoes, and other dress fabrics floated out, and drifted away with the tide.

Now, no doubt, if any of these bales were recovered, it was the duty of the salvors to hand them over to the Receiver of Wreck, and wait patiently for any sum which might be awarded them. But human nature being what it is, I submit that it was putting too great a strain on the consciences of these men to expect them to look at the matter from a strictly legal standpoint; and I regret to say that, in some cases, they tried to hide the goods from the minions of the law. Some were ploughed into the land, others were buried in the sand, and, as a last resource, some sank and buoyed. In carrying out the latter operation, they were spied by the Coastguard on duty at Tresco, and being taken red-handed, were arrested and taken to Bodmin for trial. I am writing from memory, but I believe that some of the culprits got two years' imprisonment over the affair.

I am not extenuating the conduct of these men. They put themselves in the clutches of the law, and had to abide by the consequences; but I desire to point out—and this is the whole moral and gravamen of the story—that, whereas property is fenced about with all manner of safeguards, and to interfere with it is to call down heavy penalties, human life, and especially life in peril at sea, is reckoned of such little account that it is left to shift for itself. One may well ask why should this be? Surely a human life has some monetary value, and should not be placed in the scale against the cupidity of boatmen and coastguardsmen, who, after all, are but mortal, and cannot be expected to look at the question from a purely philanthrophic point of view.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Financial Panic.—Privileges the Scillonians Enjoy.

SOMEONE has somewhere said that when the coming New Zealander is writing the history of England from the ruins of London Bridge, he will most likely be accosted by the last survivor of our race, who will want to drive a bargain with him; to form a syndicate to boom the publication, or to underwrite the whole concern—for a consideration. Truly, as Napoleon said, we are a nation of shopkeepers, and although now-a-day, trade is pretty much of a fraud, and most things, from whisky to cognac, are not what they seem, the spirit of commercialism is still strongly in evidence, and we shall most probably remain a nation of shopkeepers until the end of the chapter.

Now, whatever be the cause, this keenness for business, this love for chaffering and bartering, is very highly developed in the Scillonian. One would have to rise pretty early to get the better of him in a bargain. Impulsive and emotional like all the rest of the "Celtic fringe," he never lets his feelings run away with his judgment. Shrewd, level-headed, and thrifty, with an eye always on the main chance, no man knows better the value of the almighty dollar, or is more tenacious in sticking to it when once it tickles his palm. Yet, by some strange contradiction, though the Scillonian freezes-on to his coin with the grim determination of the Highlander, who had not been in London long before "Bang went saxpence;" and it is difficult to get him to part with it unless there is a good margin of profit, only dangle ten per cent under his nose and he rises to the bait as a jackass follows a carrot. He was one of the victims of the wiles of Jabez Balfour; was in at the death when the Confederate loan collapsed, and helped to swell the number of Carlyle's definition of an Englishman when the Liberator crash came.

On that fatal "Black Friday" in 1866, when Overend and Gurney, and so many other financial institutions went by the board, the wave of panic ultimately reached Scilly.

Now, of all the places in the world, it might have been thought that Scilly was the last to be affected by a run on the Bank, or a slump in Consols. But many careful Scillonians had been putting aside a nest-egg against a rainy day, and when the report reached them that there had been a debacle on the Stock Exchange, it caused consternation throughout the Islands. Several of the natives had invested their money in bonds, or other risky speculations, or had it on deposit in Bolitho's Bank, Penzance. The suspense was agonizing, and resolved to know the worst, some of them manned their boats, and taking their courage in both hands, rowed across to the mainland, a distance of forty miles. Hurrying to the Bank, they were delighted and overjoyed to find the doors still open, and, apparently, business going on as usual. Mr. Thomas Simon Bolitho, the head of the firm, and a pillar of finance in the district, received them smiling, and invited them to produce their deposit notes, so that they might have their money back with interest. There was money everywhere. Piles of crisp bank-notes were being flung about like curl-papers; gold littered the counter, and old Mr. Courtney the cashier (father of Lord Courtney) was sweeping it up with a shovel, and tossing it about in bags as if it were so much dirt; whilst Henry Williams, his assistant, was busy unloading more gold from the strong-room behind.

The panic-stricken Islanders had expected to find the place shut up, and the ominous words—"This Bank is closed"—which has sent the cold shivers down the backs of so many unfortunate depositors, staring them in the face. But when they beheld this prodigality of wealth, this saturnalia of riches, which, to their heated imagination, exceeded all they had ever heard or read of the golden treasures of Ind or the pactolian streams of the fabled Eldorado, they were reassured, and begged and prayed Mr. Bolitho to let the money remain where it was. The revulsion of feeling was so great that many of them cried for joy, and one old man was so overcome that he fainted clean away, and restoratives had to be applied to bring him round.

Compared with us poor over-crowded, misgoverned mortals, herded together on this strip of Mother Earth, and surrounded by problems, social, religious, and political, the bare contemplation of which makes the brain reel, and the

imagination quail, the Scillonians are a favoured class, and enjoy many privileges. What do they know, for instance, of the fierce fight with the forces of disorder and anarchy going on in our midst, which threatens to shake Society to its foundations? What do they care about your doxy, or my doxy; of High Church, Low Church, or Broad Church? What does it matter to them whether Cobden is a Saint to be worshipped, or an evil spirit to be exorcised with bell and candle? That harpy, the tax gatherer, who bleeds us to death, and is prepared to hold high carnival over our remains, is a stranger to them. The mountains of debt we have to climb, and the rivers of municipal and imperial waste and extravagance we have to wade through, are but the distant features of a landscape seen through the lens of a telescope. The rack and the thumb-screw of the Income-tax assessor vex not their soul, and they are innocent of the incidence of the Estate Duty. I doubt very much if there is a single person on the Islands who is assessed under Schedule D. though they manage to support no less than four banks, and the turn-over of their trade must amount to several thousand pounds a year. Many excise and establishment taxes do not run at Scilly. Anybody can be an auctioneer, keep an inn, sell beer, spirits, or tobacco, carry a gun, own a dog, or let out a carriage—with the consent of the Governor.

Not that the last item would be very productive. Scilly is not much of a place to set up a carriage in, as one is overboard before the horses can get well into their stride. I remember when there was only one wheeled vehicle on the Islands, and this was looked upon as a curiosity. Of rates, save a small voluntary contribution for the up-keep of the roads, there are none. No County Councils, overseers, or Boards of Guardians, dip their hands into a Scillonian's pocket. He is not called upon "to stand and deliver" his hard-earned coin for almost every conceivable purpose under the sun; parks, libraries, baths, gymnasiums, museums, music and so on *ad. lib.* And now, forsooth, not content with making us pay for the education of his children, King Demos insists that we must feed and clothe them as well. Gracious knows where we are drifting, but at this rate, one of two things seems inevitable. Either we must adopt all the children the "working-man" choose to propagate, and turn

our rate-provided schools into one large Foundling hospital, or we must enforce the good old rule that parents shall be responsible for the rearing and maintenance of their children.

In various other ways the Scillonians possess advantages denied to dwellers on the mainland. They, at any rate, have solved the problem of "back to the land." If a labourer earns 10s. a week he is in clover. His cottage, untrammelled by useless bye-laws as to the mode of erection, costs him next to nothing, and his potato and flower-patch bring him in more than enough to pay his rent. There is no "submerged tenth." The grinding, abject poverty, which stalks abroad in our great towns and cities, and casts a slur on our boasted civilization, is unknown at Scilly. The fierce struggle for power and place; the conflict between the ins and the outs, the haves, and the have-nots, reach them only as the far-off rumbling of a battle in which they have neither part nor lot. Life is a peaceful, placid stream, unruffled by the strife of parties, or the war of creeds. No lotus-eater on Old Nile ever took things easier; no Italian more thoroughly enjoys his *dolce far niente*. It is always "to-morrow," and their motto—"Never do in the morning what can be put off till the afternoon." In that perfect climate, the wear and tear of tissue is reduced to a minimum. Disease germs which pollute the water we drink, and poison the air we breathe, cannot live in an atmosphere swept by the health-giving breezes of the Atlantic. Nerves are not jarred, nor brain addled by the shriek of locomotives, or the whirr of machinery. The roar of traffic going up from the heart of our great cities like moans from the tortured souls of the damned, is turned into the soothing sound of breakers fretting against the cliffs, or, in its calmer moods, the sea lapping the boulder-strewn beach. Hurry and worry, the curse of modern life, never disturb their rest, or play havoc with their digestion. They are not conscious of having such an organ as a liver, and laugh at the hypochondriac who fancies himself a candidate for the nearest cemetery.

CHAPTER XIV.

Tresco Abbey Shares the Fate of the Monasteries.—The Abbey Gardens.—End of Mr. Smith's Rule, and the Succession of his Nephew, Mr. T. A. Dorrien-Smith.

WE left Mr. Smith, the Governor, settling down in his new home, and gathering up the threads of misrule, the legacy left him by the former owners of the property. Mr. Smith took up his residence at Tresco, an Island standing over against St. Marys, and together with the adjacent Islands of Sampson and Bryher, forming the limits of Crow Sound. At the back of Tresco is St. Martins, sheltering it from the north and east. Looked at from St. Marys across the broad waters of the Sound, Tresco is low and sandy, and gives one the impression that it is sterile and uncultivated; an impression, by the bye, which is soon dispelled on closer acquaintance. Sampson and Bryher, on the other hand, are rocky and precipitous, frowning down on Crow Sound, and protecting it from westerly gales. The tide makes a considerable outing, and at low water a large expanse of hard, yellow sand is exposed. At such times the three Islands are virtually one, access being obtained by a narrow causeway left dry by the tide. With the exception of two or three farms on Sampson, embracing the whole of the arable land, and a few other holdings, Tresco and its satellites were held almost exclusively by Mr. Smith, and were under his direct control. He had a large farmstead at Tresco devoted entirely to raising stock, and improving the breed of cattle. There was also a mill, driven by horse power, where the tenants could grind their corn.

Mr. Smith made his home in that part of the Island of Tresco where stood the remains of an ancient abbey flanked by a fresh-water lagoon. In despoiling the monasteries, the long arm of Henry VIII. did not spare even this remote part of his realm. Tresco Abbey was robbed of its revenues and the fabric allowed to fall into decay.

Monks generally knew a good thing when they saw it, and from Tavistock to Tintern, some of the loveliest and

TRESCO ABBEY, SCILLY.

THE LONG WALK, TRESCO ABBEY GARDENS.

VIEW IN TRESCO ABBEY GARDENS.

most charming spots were appropriated by the Order. There was sure to be a pond or river well-stocked with fish; an old-fashioned garden yielding all manner of fruit, and a goodly supply of fat capons for the use of the monkish table. For, if I read history aright, crucifying the flesh was never a strong point with monastic institutions, and the counting of beads, or the chanting of aves, seldom or ever interfered with the enjoyment of those creature comforts dear to the heart of Mother Church since the days of St. Augustine. And, coming down to more recent times, whoever heard of a priest who was not a good trencherman? Perhaps it is a relic of the days when religion was proscribed, and men had to set up their altars in some secluded spot far from the public gaze; but, at any rate, if in roaming over the country one comes across a snug little homestead nestling in creepers and honeysuckles, sheltered by a nice clump of trees from the wintry blast, with its back to the north, and looking out on pleasant terraces and partierres, one need not stop to inquire whose residence it is—it is sure to be the parson's. The latter-day followers of John the Baptist do not go out into the wilderness and subsist on locusts and wild honey.

Tresco is one of these favoured spots. Warmed by the gulf stream, and sheltered by the Islands of St. Martins, and Sampson and Bryher, it basks in perpetual summer. In the depth of winter the mean temperature seldom falls below forty degrees, and frost and snow are practically unknown. The climate is so equable that, semi-tropical plants which would shrivel up and wither in our smoke-laden atmosphere, flourish luxuriantly. The Cape geranium, the common fuchsia, the sweet-scented verbena, and various kinds of myrtles and veronicas, are grown as hedges to protect the crops. Looking across Crow Sound from St. Marys, these hedges are one blaze of colour, and the air is heavy with their perfume.

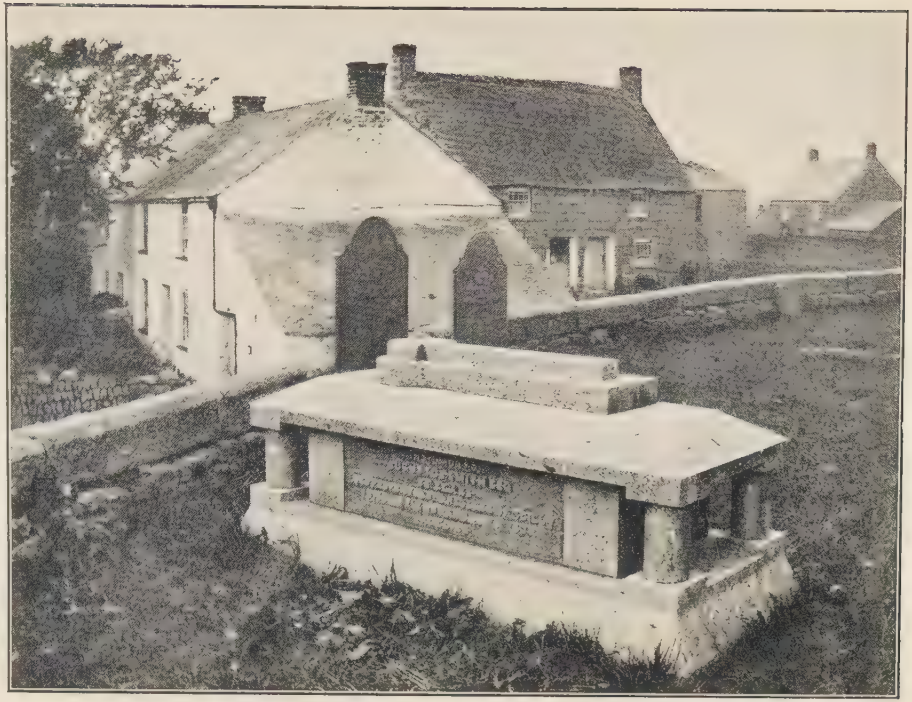
The Abbey stands in a rocky cairn looking south. The grounds are laid out in a succession of terraces, and from every nook and crevice rare specimens of cacti, sedums, and mesembry anthemums with their orange and purple bloom, sprawl over the rocks and run riot among the borders. In the gardens, South American aloes throw up their flowering stalk heavy with aromatic fragrance, twenty feet high, and giant dracaenas wave their feathery heads in the balmy

breeze. Exotic palms, the bamboo, the sugar-cane, and the cotton plant, grow in the open, and tropical mosses and orchids hang from the trees. Outside on the breezy downs one may drink in pure ozone with the tap on from the Atlantic, and revel in an atmosphere untainted by microbes or bacilli. Wild duck, woodcock, and plover, resting in their migratory flight, crowd the marshes, ponds, and lagoons asking to be shot, and the sea is alive with fish.

In this Eveless paradise (for he never married) Mr. Smith dwelt like some Arab Shiek amidst his subject tribes. Casting in his lot with the rest of the Islanders, and devoting his life to ameliorating their condition, and improving their surroundings, he had little time or inclination to cultivate the tender passion, or to form matrimonial ties. Mr. Smith applied himself entirely to the development of his newly-acquired estate. His great hobby was his gardens, and on these he lavished all his care and attention. An enthusiastic botanist, Mr. Smith was never happier than when he was endeavouring to acclimatise some rare plant or flower which he had introduced to the Islands, or exchanging specimens with his friend, Sir Joseph Hooker, then curator at Kew. Many kinds of wild-fowl, not to be met with in any other part of the British Isles, frequent Scilly, and make their homes amongst the barren rocks and inaccessible cliffs. Mr. Smith was never much of a sportsman, and seldom went out solely for the purpose of "killing something;" but he was an ardent ornithologist, and in constant correspondence with his close personal friend, the late Edward Hearle Rodd, of Penzance, one of the leading naturalists in the West of England, whose collection was much enriched by Mr. Smith's contributions.

In person, Mr. Smith was a fine specimen of an Englishman. Somewhat inclined to be corpulent, but erect and active, with bull-neck, firm mouth, and square jaw, it did not need a physiognomist to see that a strong will, combined with great tenacity of purpose, was marked on every line of his face. Mr. Smith was not the man to shilly-shally. Having once made up his mind to pursue a certain course, nothing deterred him from carrying his resolve into action: he went straight ahead without diverging a hairs-breadth to the right hand or the left. But we all have our little weaknesses, and although Mr. Smith was as brave as a lion, and would fight to the death for what he held to be

GROUP OF OLD SCILLONIANS.



MR. AUGUSTUS SMITH'S GRAVE, IN ST. BURYAN CHURCHYARD.

THE OLD COLLEGIATE CHURCH, ST. BURYAN, CORNWALL.

right on shore, on the water he was the veriest coward. He never got what Jack calls his "sea-legs," and was always more or less uncomfortable afloat. I have crossed over to Scilly with him many scores of times, and as soon as we cast off, he went below, laid himself flat on his back in the captain's cabin, and never appeared on deck again until we were well inside Menewithan. Mr. Smith was generally taken off in his own boat, in charge of Horatio Jenkin, in Crow Sound, and it was not until he had landed at Tresco that he recovered from the effects of the voyage.

Shut up as he was for the greater part of the year on these lone and inaccessible Islands, Mr. Smith never became a recluse, or a misanthrope, but, on the contrary, always kept well in touch with the current events of the day. He was a member of "Boodles" and other fashionable clubs; took an active part in County affairs, associated himself with most of the learned Societies, such as the Royal Institution of Cornwall at Truro, the Royal Geological Society at Penzance, and the Polytechnic at Falmouth, and, on more than one occasion, occupied the Presidential chair. Mr. Smith also found time to enter Parliament, having sat for Truro before the borough was merged into the County division. He was known, I believe, as "Scilly Smith," to distinguish him from others of that ilk having seats in the House.

It is wonderful the influence one man has over the destinies of others. If Garibaldi had not lived, probably to-day there would be no united Italy. Had Bismarck not been at the helm at a critical period in the history of Prussia, Germany might still be a number of petty States, torn by internal jealousies and dissensions, instead of standing four-corners to the world, a solid, homogeneous whole. Mr. Smith found Scilly, comparatively speaking, a wilderness; he left it on the high road to prosperity. At his death in 1872, the aspect of the place had so changed that, instead of affording a bare subsistence to an impoverished and struggling population, it boasted a considerable rent-roll, and an industrial out-put, of one kind and another, running into thousands of tons a year.

Oddly enough, although Mr. Smith spent most of his time among the Islands he loved so well, he expressed a wish to be buried on the mainland, and his remains lie in the churchyard of the Old Collegiate Church at St. Buryan,

within ear-shot of the sea as it frets into the coast at Penberth and Lamorna Coves. As a clue to the motive which inspired this peculiar wish, I have heard it said that Mr. Smith could see the morning sun lighting up St. Buryan Tower—next to Probus one of most conspicuous in the county—as he lay in bed at Tresco, and probably the sight of the Cornish Coast bathed in sunshine, and capped by the lofty spire which for so many hundreds of years had looked out on the blue waters of the Channel, made a lasting impression on his mind.

At Tresco there is an ancient tower known as Cromwell's Tower, erected by the Parliamentary forces, and, crowning a rocky cairn, a monument to the memory of Mr. Augustus Smith. It is built in the form of a pyramid of rough blocks of native granite piled loosely one on another, and no king or conqueror could possibly have a more enduring memorial. From this lofty spur, which commands a bird's eye view of Tresco and the surrounding Islands, the monument looks down on the work accomplished by Mr. Smith, and the gardens that he loved, and there it will remain for all time, in lasting remembrance of the man, and what he did for Scilly.

Mr. Augustus Smith was succeeded by his nephew, Mr. Thomas Algernon Smith-Dorrien-Smith, a double-hyphened word rendered necessary by his having to adopt the additional surname of Smith under his Uncle's will. By the same instrument he is compelled, I believe, to spend a certain time on the Islands every year, and to keep the testator's much-loved gardens up to the same level of perfection. Mr. Dorrien-Smith sold out of the army to take up his patrimony at Scilly, and follows in his uncle's footsteps as regards everything that tends to promote the welfare of the Islands. It is understood that he has succeeded in obtaining an extension, or rather a renewal of the original lease, from the Duchy authorities, and this enables him to act with much greater freedom than would have been possible had he been hampered by the expiring lease granted to the Duke of Leeds. The Smith-Dorriens are an old county family having their seat at Haresfoot, near Great Berkhempsted, in Hertfordshire. Major-General Smith-Dorrien, who won laurels in the South African War, is a brother of Mr. Dorrien-Smith, and another brother is the Rector of Crediton.

CROMWELL'S TOWER, TRESCO, SCILLY.

MONUMENT TO THE LATE MR. AUGUSTUS SMITH,
TRESCO, SCILLY.

MR. THOMAS ALGERNON SMITH-DORRIEN-SMITH.

CHAPTER XV.

The Cutter "Ariadne."—Difficulties of the Voyage.—Fogs, and their Effect on the Diffusion of Sound.

THE nineteenth century had run nearly half its course before any attempt was made to establish regular communication between Scilly and the main. The Islands nominally belonged to the Duchy of Cornwall, but for all practical purposes, they were as completely isolated and cut adrift as if they had been so many coral Islands in the Pacific. Once upon a time the veil lifted, and we were startled by an account of a wreck, or some other terrible calamity, which "staggered humanity;" but again the curtain fell, and for all the general public knew or cared, Scilly might just as well have been in the ice-pack in the Polar Seas.

At last the natives took the matter into their own hands and provided a sloop as a connecting link with the outer world. The little cutter was called the *Ariadne*, and when Captain Frank Tregarthen (the same that figured in the pig episode) went up to one of the Eastern ports and brought her home, she caused just as much a sensation as if she had been the challenger for the American Cup. Originally, the *Ariadne* had been a gentleman's yacht, and she was the pride of Captain Frank's heart. Her deck was scrubbed and holystoned, her spars bright as varnish could make them, her sails of the best No. 2 Canvas, and the brass-work of her binnacle and companion, and the boss of her curiously-carved tiller, shone like a mirror. The *Ariadne* was intended to ply between St. Marys and Penzance "wind and weather permitting." She carried a few letters picked up at the Post Office, such freight as might offer, and, once upon a time, any stray passenger having the temerity to brave the passage. The exports from the Islands were practically nil. A few gallons of shrimps, and a dozen or so of crabs and lobsters constituted the entire cargo. In the opposite direction, the consignments probably consisted of flour and groceries to eke out the stock of provisions, and to provide luxuries for those who had sickened of "buckhorn" and rye bread.

Visitors to Scilly were few and far between. No one ever thought of going to the Islands for pleasure, and those whose business called them there were only too anxious to get away on the first favourable opportunity. But here was the rub. Captain Frank kept the only hotel, and was in this peculiar position—his guests could not possibly get away until he chose to take them. He usually counted heads before leaving Penzance, and laid in a stock of provisions accordingly. His customers were rounded-up like sheep in a South American corral, and there were no means of escape unless one swam across. There you were, willy nilly, and, somehow or other, the weather never pointed to set fair until all the provisions had been consumed, and to avoid semi-starvation it was necessary to go back to the mainland to replenish the larder.

The distance from pier to pier is forty miles, and nowhere else, perhaps, is there to be found a similar stretch of water bristling with so many dangers. The North Sea knows how to romp about a bit when in the humour, and I have seen a terrible bobbery after the dreaded mistral in the Mediterranean ; but these are but trickling rills compared to the sea which sweeps into the English Channel with a westerly or south-easterly gale. The broad Atlantic, here confined to an ever-narrowing bed, seems to resent the fetters placed on its freedom, and frets and fumes like a giant bound with cords. Piled up in hills the ocean greets the sky ; the angry waves, the salt spray flying from their crests, leap and frolic in their strength, and break in thunders on the Cornish coast. Seen from the Land's End Point, that *ultima thule* from whence England looks out on the Western main, the waste of waters stretches away league after league to that vast continent on the other side, now peopled by so many teeming millions of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Unless one has stood on those beetling cliffs and looked down on the surging, foaming waters, it is impossible to form any idea of the grandeur and majesty of the scene. At one's feet, so near, apparently, that one can almost span the chasm, but in reality more than a mile from the shore, stands the lonely Longships, framed in a wilderness of frowning rocks. The sea swirls around it like a hell, and every alternate wave caps the lantern, and drifts away in showers of spray across the land. Many a

THE CUTTER "ARIADNE."

time the keepers have been swept off their feet as they clung to the outside rail, and got carried away with the tide, which runs here with the swiftness of a mill-dam. During a storm the tower rocks to such an extent that men have been known to turn grey with terror in a single night. One man, who had not been used to rock lighthouses, was so frightened and unnerved, that he went mad, stabbed himself in the region of the heart, and, to all appearances, fell dead.

It is probably known that there are never less than three keepers on these out-lying towers, lest in the event of anything happening to either one of two, one man should be left alone. There is a case on record where one of the keepers on the Eddystone was shut up with a corpse for more than a month, and had to salt it in order to prevent decomposition.

The Longships' men covered their comrade over with a sheet, and made signals to Sennen Cove that they required assistance. Two days afterwards, when the weather had moderated, our friend Matthey Nicholas and his "pare"—that is his family—put off in their boat to see what was the matter. Getting within speaking distance, they learnt the fate of the keeper, and by careful manœuvering got the boat in touch with the Lighthouse. There is a derrick rigged at the top of the tower used to hoist in stores, provisions, &c., and wrapped in a sheet, the "corpse" was slung in a bridle and carefully lowered away. To assist the operation, "the boy Matthey" climbed up the mast, and when the body came within reach, put his arm round its waist to ease it into the boat. To his amazement, the "corpse" opened its eyes, and clutched Matthey round the neck. To say that he was horrified is but faintly to express his feelings. Letting go his hold of the mast, "Matthey" and the "corpse" tumbled headlong into the bottom of the boat, clasped in each other's arms. They pulled away to the shore as fast as possible, landed the "corpse," and despatched a messenger in hot haste for a doctor, who lived at St. Just, three miles distant. On the doctor's arrival, and restoratives being applied, the man soon regained consciousness, and, I believe, is alive to this day.

It seems that when Matthey put his arm around the man's waist, he accidentally placed his fingers into the

wound, and the pain caused by probing the puncture in this rough and ready way, brought the man to, with the result already described. "Tell 'ee," said the boy Matthey, who was the hero of the story, "I've heaard tell of ghoasts a'fore now, and knawd 'em praach 'bout devils in the Methedy Chapel up to Main (Mayon), but aw mee dear, I'd raather faace fifty devils, an' a bra' passel of ghoastes thrawed in ovver, than that thear dead keeper. A' ded grizzle at me, an' a' ded glaze at me, an' a' hitched me round the throaat soa that I cudden clunky (swallow). I wor moast chucked, ess a' was."

The dangers of the Scilly passage are not to be gauged entirely by the distance, though in that forty miles just as heavy seas are met with as on a voyage to New York. A well-found vessel with plenty of sea room, seldom goes amiss, but let her have to face broken water on a dead lee shore, and the chances are that she will not come off without material damage. The Scilly Islands are very difficult to make in thick weather, and it requires careful navigation to pick them up. You are sailing right across the course of everything passing up and down Channel, from German and American mail-boats "breaking the record," to a fleet of lumbering coasters threshing their way around the land. Fog is also particularly to be dreaded. These sea-fogs come on very suddenly, and swoop down on the Channel like a blanket, so that one can hardly see the length of one's nose.

The peculiarity about these fogs is the effect they have on the diffusion of sound. The fog-horn at the Lizard is supposed to have a sound radius of several miles, and under ordinary circumstances, can be heard far out to sea; but there are times when the atmospheric conditions produced by fog are such that ships have been known to get close in on the Stags before any warning reached them.* It is the same at sea. Everything is distorted, and sound gives no idea of distance. It is not at all a pleasant sensation to hear hooters and syrens shrieking around, without being able to locate the whereabouts of any one in particular, and to know that at any moment the huge form of a big ocean tramp, ploughing along at a speed of twenty miles an hour, may loom out of the mist, and be right on

* The recent loss of the *Suevic* on the Stags affords a striking illustration of this danger.

top of you before a boat could be lowered or a lifebelt served out. Moreover, there is the certainty that the merest tap from such a body, propelled by the power of twenty thousand horses, would send your little craft to the bottom before one had time to say one's prayers. It adds a new terror to Channel navigation, as when the fog fiend is abroad, one never knows from what quarter the danger may come, or how to provide against it.

On one occasion, back in the seventies, I was making one of my usual trips to Scilly, when just as we got clear of the land we picked up a fog so dense and "pea-soupy," that we could hardly see the jib-boom end from the taff-rail. The hands moving about the deck looked like shadows in some super-heated inferno, and the man at the wheel was transformed into a monster chained to a stake, throwing about his arms convulsively. We could hear the Rundlestone bell-buoy faintly in the distance, and, at regular intervals, the discharge of detonators from the Longships, but everything else was blurred and blotted out. It was dangerous to proceed, but far more dangerous to stop. The tide, which runs between Scilly and the main like a sluice, would be sure to carry us out of our course, and we should lose our reckoning. After dodging about for some time, keeping a sharp look-out for any signs of land, we found that we had over-run our distance, and, in fact, had missed the Islands entirely. We had not the least idea of our whereabouts, so after holding a consultation, it was decided to put out a boat and "feel" for the land. As luck would have it, the boat's crew soon caught the sound of breakers, and as most Scilly men know the exact size and shape of every rock around the Islands, from the Lion Rock to the Crim, and from Crebawethen to Mincarlo, by creeping in carefully, and verifying their position, they were able to locate us as somewhere away at the back of Agnes. On the return of the boat we shaped our course accordingly, and going dead slow, groped our way into St. Marys through Crow Sound. This was not at all an unusual experience. Instances are known where boats have been out for hours, and on the fog lifting, found themselves back at the starting point. One of the survivors of the Schiller, clinging to some wreckage, drifted away to the westward on the ebb tide, and catching the flood as it made to the eastward, was carried nearly around

the Islands, and ultimately cast up at the back of St. Martins.

At the best of times the passage to Scilly is not to be lightly undertaken. Given a fair wind and plenty of it, a sailing cutter will leave Penzance harbour and making one long reach, slip across in six or seven hours without shifting tack or sheet. But if it happens that the wind is light and baffling, so that the sails flap idly against the mast, and the main-boom goes over with a crash every time she dips her nose into the greasy sea, the voyage may be prolonged for a whole day, or even two. The flood tide carries her well up to the eastward of the Lizard, and the ebb back again to the Longships, with tantalizing persistency, and one whistles in vain for the much longed-for breeze. I have often been caught in the doldrums between the Land's End and Scilly, when we had got almost round Menewithan, only to drift back into a worse position. Nothing is more trying to the temper, or puts a greater strain on one's patience, than to be kept dodging about in this way, and I do not wonder that sailors generally have a long string of swear-words in their vocabulary. They act as a safety-valve to relieve their pent-up feelings.

With a steamer it is different: she is not so dependent on wind and tide. If the weather admits of her starting she generally manages to get across, though I have frequently known her obliged to put back after getting a terrible "gruelling" when clear of the land. The course lies along the western shore of Mount's Bay, passing in succession Newlyn, Mousehole, Lamorna, Penberth, Castle Treryn, (with the Logan Rock) Porthcurno, and Porthgwarra, keeping clear of the Rundlestone reef until well abreast of Tol-Pedyn, then hauling out to the southward and leaving the Wolf on the left hand, the steamer steers direct for the Islands, which, on a clear day, are soon seen like a fog-bank low down on the horizon. First St. Martins Head, and then Menewithan assume form and substance, and presently the whole archipelago is spread out like a map. If the tide suits, the entrance is usually made by way of Crow Sound, though this route is not always available, as at times there is not enough water over Crow-bar. In this case the steamer has to go round to the back of St. Marys and enter through St. Marys Sound. This latter channel is by far the more intricate of the two, and should never be attempted unless the

THE LAND'S END, CORNWALL.

boat is in charge of a skilled pilot. The place is studded with dangerous rocks and ledges, and a novice would be very likely to run full tilt against one of these obstructions before he knew where he was. Coming through St. Marys Sound, there is a fine view of St. Agnes Lighthouse, and some of the grandest rock scenery on the Islands, including the Giant's Castle and the Pulpit Rock.

CHAPTER XVI.

The "Little Western" takes the Place of the "Ariadne."—Cornwall Cut off from the rest of the Country.—The Rage for Holidays.

THE first steamer to run between Scilly and Penzance was the *Little Western*, so called to distinguish her from the *Great Western*, which, it may be remembered, was one of the pioneers of ocean-going steamers, and in her day thought to be a marvel of marine construction. The *Little Western* was hardly bigger than a good-sized steam-launch, and could have been slung under the quarter of one of our modern leviathans without any difficulty. To compare her, for instance, to one of the latest additions to the Cunard fleet, would be like pitting "puffing Billy" against a first-class locomotive drawing a non-stop train. "Call that thing a steamer," said an old salt to me one day, "why she's only a few sheets of angle-iron riveted together, and a bucket of water in a perspiration." Built long before iron shipbuilding had attained anything like its present proportions, the *Little Western* was of very modest dimensions, and her crew consisted of five hands all told—captain, mate, engineer, deck-hand, and stoker. Thus equipped, she braved the passage to and from Scilly all the year round, until finally the bucket went once too often to the well, and she ended her career ingloriously on the rocks.

I had crossed and recrossed so many times in the *Little Western* that I got to regard her as an old and familiar friend, and never took kindly to her successors, the *Lady of the Isles*, the *Queen of the Bay*, and the *Lionesse*. The retirement of her old skipper, Captain Frank Tregarthen, also severed a link with the past. He was succeeded by Captain Hicks, and afterwards by Captains Barnes, Deason and Hooper, but neither of them ever took the place of rollicking, loquacious Captain Frank, who knew every passenger by name, and always had a merry laugh and a tall yarn to beguile the tediousness of the voyage. Captain Frank prided himself that, during all

the years he commanded the *Little Western*, he never met with a mishap, and used to say, "You see if they don't run her nose against the rocks one of these fine days;" and, sure enough, he was right, for in cutting it too fine on one of her trips, she ran on shore and became a total wreck.

The *Little Western* took the place of the *Ariadne*, and, needless to say, although by no means a racer, she was a very great improvement on the old sailing cutter. It was now possible for the first time to hold out some inducement for people to visit the Islands without being buffeted about for a day or two in the Channel. The *Little Western* was a capital sea boat, and considering the dangers and difficulties of the voyage, under ordinary circumstances made a fairly good passage. She started from Penzance Pier at 10.30 a.m., and was due at St. Marys about 2.30 p.m., three times a week in summer, and twice a week in winter, under contract with the Government for the conveyance of H.M. mails. The payment for this service was £300 a year, and probably this is the smallest sum ever voted by Parliament under the head of "packet-service."*

It was a proud day for Captain Frank when he was entitled to hoist the Mail Flag at the peak, and to strut down Chapel Street, Penzance, with the mail for Scilly tucked away under his arm. There was a time when the Scillonians had to get their correspondence in the best way they could. Any stray boatman having business with the mainland called at the Penzance Post Office for Scilly letters, which were treated as "ship-letters," and paid for accordingly. So that when they had a Mail Packet all to themselves, flying a flag emblazoned with the Royal Arms, and having the words "General Post Office" plainly in evidence as it fluttered proudly in the breeze, the Scillonians felt that they had gone up in the social scale, and were of considerably enhanced importance. Of this improved status and bearing Captain Frank was the outward and visible sign, and, rising to the occasion, he decked himself out in a brand new suit of navy blue, with a band of gold lace round his cap, and looked every inch a sailor.

Cornwall was still the region beyond railways, where, not so many years ago, the natives are said to have flogged

* It shows how even in small matters the estimates mount up. The allowance for this service is now £700 a year, and like Oliver Twist, the contractor is asking for more.

the hake for eating the pilchards, and tried to wall-in the cuckoo. Some of the more remote parts of the County were a twenty hours' journey from London, and the traveller had to find his way across open downs and uncultivated moors, with no better accommodation than that afforded by the old road-side inn, like the Jamaica Inn, and the Indian Queens. A few daring spirits, braving the discomforts of a long ride by stage-coach, had discovered the beauties of Boscastle and Tintagel, the charms of Newquay, and the salubrity of St. Ives and Penzance; but, practically, the whole district was entirely outside the beaten track unknown and unappreciated.

And, of the few strangers who found their way so far west, not one in fifty had the hardihood to penetrate to an outlandish place like Scilly. It was bad enough to be stranded at Penzance, sixty miles away from a railway (which had then only reached as far as Plymouth), and to be entirely cut off from all telegraphic communication; but to be dumped down at Scilly at that time, one might just as well be landed on the Island of Ascension, or dropped from a balloon on the Peak of Teneriffe. You were "out of it" for a period only to be measured by the state of the elements, and the goodwill and pleasure of mine host Captain Frank. I have often been held up at Scilly for a week on a stretch, with the sky like brass, and a strong easterly gale blowing straight down Channel, which rendered any attempt at making the passage quite impracticable.

The craze for holidays and amusements which of late years has set in with such virulence, fostering a spirit of unrest, and creating a craving for change and excitement which is the curse of modern life, had not then reached its full development. The virus was at work, and there were certain symptoms pointing to danger; but, as yet, the disease had not attacked a vital part, nor spread like a wolfish ulcer over the whole of our social system. Instead of flying half across Europe to some much-lauded place under the shadow of the Alps or the Pyrenees, where one is baked by day only to be frozen to death at night; or to some equally glorified spot on the tideless shores of the Mediterranean, where, from my experience, there is frequently little or no sanitation to speak of, and one is only kept from being poisoned by the deodorising properties of

THE S.S. "LITTLE WESTERN."

the air, our forefathers were content to seek rest and recreation nearer home. To wander along the flowery hedgerows, and by the leafy coombes of fair Devon; to stray through the glades of the New Forest; to gloat over the sylvan loveliness of Kent and Surrey; to explore the charming valleys of the Thames, the Dart, the Tamar, and the Wye, and to look upon Snowdon and Ben Nevis as at least worthy of a visit.

And, following the example set them by their betters, the "proletariat" have also become infected by the same disorder. No longer does the dance on the village green, a visit to the nearest fair, or a friendly game of bowls with the youth of the adjoining parish, satisfy their longings or bound their aspirations. The poor, down-trodden working man, must have his excursions to the sea-side, his trips to Paris, his bean-feasts and his junketings by road, by river, and by rail, with drink *ad. lib.* and smokes galore. He must rush off to the all-absorbing cricket or football match—played for money and prostrated to professionalism—regardless of the fact that he is burning the candle at both ends—idling away his time, and pouring his hard-earned coin into the lap of the railway companies and the publican. A fair day's work for a fair day's wage is an old-fashioned axiom more honoured in the breach than the observance. The cry is pleasure first, work afterwards. Work? Yes, but let me do as little of it as possible, and exact the uttermost farthing as the price of my labour. If there is a standard of efficiency fix it as low as may be, and let all above me be pulled down to my level. Let over-exertion be high treason, and any display of energy a capital offence.

As for the common bond, the community of interests which should subsist between employer and employed, there is no such thing now-a-days. The master tries to outwit the man, the man tries to coerce the master; and in this never-ending see-saw trade is being driven away, and the country is on the road to ruin. And the irony of it all is, no sooner does the cry go up that the so-called working man "has got no work to do," than it is found that he has been squandering his means and dissipating his resources in these and sundry other unthrifty ways, and is, in fact, a pauper. Unlike every other class who are called upon to exercise prudence, practice self-denial, and endeavour to

make some provision for a rainy day, the hard-handed son of toil—if this is not a misnomer—is a chartered libertine, and when overtaken by the slightest misfortune is at once homeless and penniless, and proclaiming his woes from the housetops, without more to-do throws himself and his family on the rates. That the picture is not overdrawn is evident from what we see going on around us; and though, no doubt, our help and our sympathy should go out to the honest, industrious poor in the hour of their adversity, one cannot help thinking that the hand of charity would be strengthened, and the flow of benevolence quickened, did not the thought intrude that, in too many instances, the unemployed have largely contributed to their own downfall.

A CALM DAY: MOUNT'S BAY.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Eventful Voyage to Scilly.

ONE morning in autumn, just as the swallows were leaving, and the fishermen were taking on board their nets to go in quest of the toothsome pilchard, the *Little Western* lay tied up at the Penzance Extension Pier. It was low water, and the masonry of the Pier towering thirty feet above her, and a big tramp lying in the next tier, made the little craft look all the more diminutive by reason of her surroundings. The *Little Western* was on the berth for Scilly, and due to start at 10.30 a.m. All was hurry and confusion. A miscellaneous freight was piled up on the quay, and the steam-winch rattled, and double-purchase blocks creaked and groaned as it was swung on board. Jack Edwards, the mate, hairless as a mummy, and having as many lives as a cat, pulled at a short pipe, and twirled a mop over the gunwale, giving the finishing touches to the ship's toilet before the passengers embarked. Mr. Jones, the engineer, who was one of the survivors from the wreck of the *London*, and carried a watch indented with the impact of the blow as he sprang into the boat just before she shoved off from the doomed ship, bustled about, oiling bearings, tightening up a nut or a bolt, and having an eye in general to the condition of his engine before making a start; and Williams the steward was busy setting his house in order, and making preparations for the crowd of "lame ducks" who would be sure to require his services before the end of the voyage. Captain Frank surveyed the scene from the bridge, giving an order here, and an instruction there. Presently, the mails arrived, and having been ostentatiously handed over to the Captain by Ferris the railway man, and stowed away in the mail-room, the hatches were fastened down, covered over with tarpaulins, and all was ready to "face the music" when the ship got outside.

It was one of those "foxy," deceptive mornings, peculiar to these latitudes at this season. Not a leaf stirred, and the

moisture-laden air was heavy and oppressive. A hot haze hung over the land and rolled in fleecy billows up the Coombe Valley. Gulval lay shrouded amidst its orchards and flower gardens, and Castle-an-Dinas gaunt and bare, crowning the hill which commands a view of both Channels, was seemingly in cloudland. A scarcely perceptible swell lapped the pierhead, and spent itself on the garbage-strewn beach within the harbour. Flocks of gulls hovered around, flapping their wings lazily, as if it was really too much trouble for them to fish for their breakfast; or stood perched in rows in expectation of a find from the cook's galley. Tier after tier the Mount's Bay fishing fleet lay aground, their tanned sails flopping idly against the mast, and their "fleets" of nets, which had just been barked, spread out to dry. Outside in the Bay the sea was like glass, and heaved restlessly, responsive to the rising tide; and the shingle along the shore from Sandy Bank to Lariggan, sucked out by each receding wave, ground and rattled with tiresome monotony. St. Michael's Mount had put on its night-cap, and was wreathed in fog, save that the Castle itself stood out bold and grey, the vapoury mist hugging the base and clinging to the time-worn battlements. All the Eastern land from Cudden Point to the Rill, and from the Rill to the Lizard, loomed up distinctly, with Mullion Island and Kynance Cove, and every rock and projection clearly outlined against the dark, serpentine cliffs. In the background, Tregoning and Godolphin, two of Cornwall's guardian hills, were enveloped in a sort of blue haze; and all seemed so near that one could hardly fancy that the coast was quite ten miles away as the crow flies.

Now, without tapping a barometer, or consulting a weather-chart, everybody familiar with this part of the coast knows that when such atmospheric conditions prevail, they bode no good. It is the hush before the storm, the stillness which precedes the avalanche. Nature, like a hound held in the leash, seems to be gathering up her forces for a final spring. Look out for squalls. It may be in a few hours, or it may be a whole day, according to the extent of the depression and other surrounding circumstances; but, for certain, within a given time the dreaded south-easter swoops down on Mount's Bay, lashing it into fury, and piling its angry waters up along the shore.

Towering waves, toppling over each other in their wild career, pour over the Penzance Promenade, and striking the sea-wall with titanic force, shake every house to its foundation. Along the eastern green from Chyandour to Long Rock, a smothering sea, breaking far out among the rocks, rolls in and threatens to submerge the adjacent land. Breakers boom on Penjersick Beach, Praa Sands, and Loo Bar, and the entire sweep of the Bay is one mass of broken water. Woe betide the ship caught in the clutches of a south-easter in Mount's Bay. The greater part of it is a dead lee shore, and let her once miss stays, and nothing short of a miracle can save her from total destruction.

Among the passengers waiting to embark on the *Little Western* on this eventful morning, in addition to the writer, was the late Dr. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury. Dr. Benson had been appointed first Bishop of Truro on the severance of Cornwall from the See of Exeter. He had never been to Scilly, and was now about to pay a visit to that remote part of his Diocese. This is not the place, probably, to enlarge on Dr. Benson's work in Cornwall, or to indulge in any panegyric on his character; but, as he bulked so largely in the public eye, and was so distinguished a prelate of the Church of England, I may be permitted to say that no Bishop, either before or since, (there were Bishops of St. Germans and Bodmin I believe many centuries ago, so that the Bishopric of Cornwall was merely a revival) who exercised such influence for good, or so completely won the affection and esteem of the Cornish people.

I am not speaking disparagingly of Bishop Wilkinson, or Bishop Gott, (Dr. Stubbs has made a most favourable impression but has not yet been proved) when I say that they never filled the place occupied by Dr. Benson. There was something in the personality of the man, some charm in voice and manner, some attraction in the sunny smile and wealth of iron-grey hair which drew all men unto him, and it would be well for the Church to-day, torn and distracted by warring factions, if there were a few more Dr. Bensons to preside over its destinies.

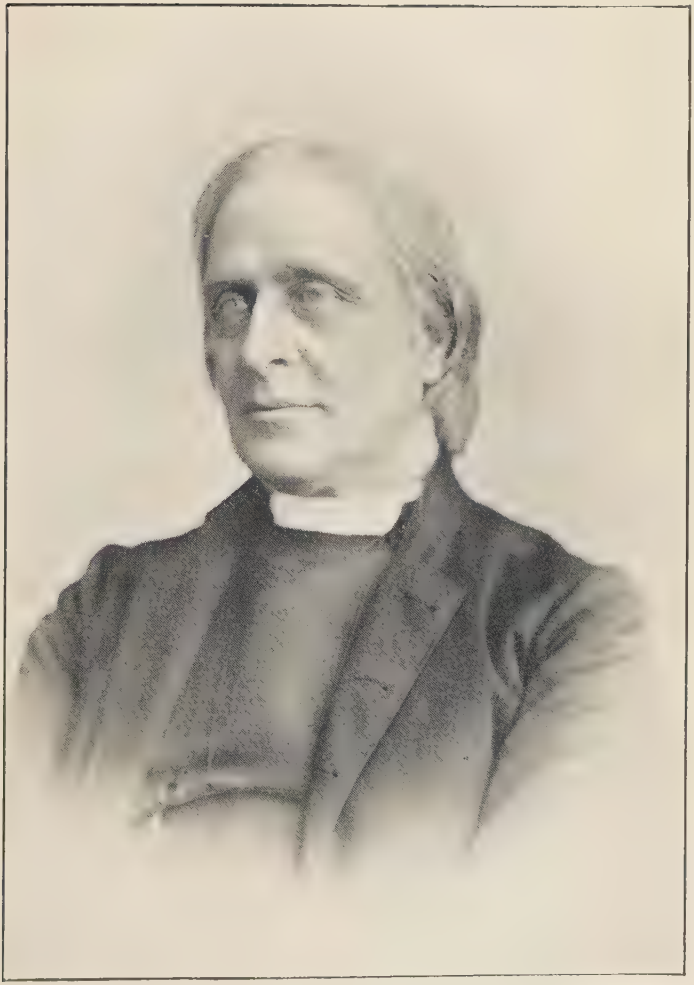
Broad-minded and tolerant, Dr. Benson's sympathies went out to all labourers in the Christian harvest-field, and his Catholic spirit embraced every seeker after truth. He had a difficult role to play. The Church in Cornwall

during the reign of Henry of Exeter, had always been more or less of a dead Church. Sleepy parsons preached to still more sleepy congregations; drowsy parish clerks droned out the responses, and scratch choirs chanted the Psalms sadly out of tune. There was dry-rot, not only in the fabric but in the pulpit, and with the exception of the squire, the doctor, and a few other privileged communicants, in country parishes, any interest in church affairs was simply non-existent. It needed therefore a man of exceptional ability and powers of organisation, to gather up the scattered fragments, to quicken the dry bones of apathy and indifference, and to make the Church, what a National Church really should be, the Church of the many and not of the few.

With whole-hearted zeal, untiring energy, and many-sided qualifications, Dr. Benson applied himself to the task of infusing new life and vitality into this almost moribund Church which Providence had committed to his charge. Gathering around him at Truro a band of willing workers —lay and clerical—who were fired by his example, every parish in the scattered Diocese from Sennen to Morwenstow, and from Padstow to Fowey, soon felt the touch of the reformer's hand.

Few men could have taken up the reins of ecclesiastical government with so little friction and disturbance. The one great test of an Anglican Bishop coming into a place like Cornwall was his bearing towards the Nonconformists. Cornwall and Wales are hot-beds of Nonconformity. John Wesley, as is well known, obtained most of his converts in the Duchy and the Principality, and nowhere else, perhaps, within the four corners of the United Kingdom, is dissent so rampant and so militant. It is true, time has softened down some of the asperities of religious strife, and the lion and the lamb, if not wholly reconciled, are content to lie down together in peace; but there is still a tendency among the various sects to resist anything like an interference with the tenets of their faith, and the head of the Established Church has to walk warily to avoid treading on the corns of his many doxied constituents.

It may be that, as a class, the Cornish are more law-abiding than the Welsh, and not quite so quarrelsome and pugnacious; but, nevertheless, they cling with the utmost tenacity to the belief of their forefathers, and are at once



DR. BENSON, BISHOP OF TRURO.

up in arms against any infringement of their religious liberties. It says much for Dr. Benson's tact and discretion that, during the whole of his episcopate, down to the time when he was translated to a still higher sphere of duty, he managed to steer an even course, and while upholding the doctrines and extending the influence of the Church of which he was so distinguished a member, he won the regard and esteem of every other denomination.

Dr. Benson was a bad sailor, and would have been well advised to have deferred his visit to Scilly to a more auspicious occasion. But, all undismayed by signs and portents which to the nautical eye were writ large, he gathered up his belongings, bade farewell to his host, Mr. T. S. Bolitho, and took his seat on the after-deck of the *Little Western*, resolved, if the worst happened, to offer himself up as a martyr on the altar of duty. The other passengers were rather a mixed lot. It was the fag-end of the season, and there was the usual sprinkling of tourists, map in hand and knapsack on back, "doing" Cornwall, and who, after a week's scamper through the county, would go back to town fully prepared to describe its scenery, and to discuss the character of its people, as if they had been familiar with them all their lives. It is astonishing what a glutton for knowledge your modern tourist is, and how rapidly he assimilates the history and topography of the various districts he hurries through. Of course, there was the inevitable "drummer," sleek and oily, who could talk nothing but shop, and had the yard measure, and the "What can I do for you?" air, stamped indelibly on every line of his face. There were also a few natives returning from their "trip to England" and myself.

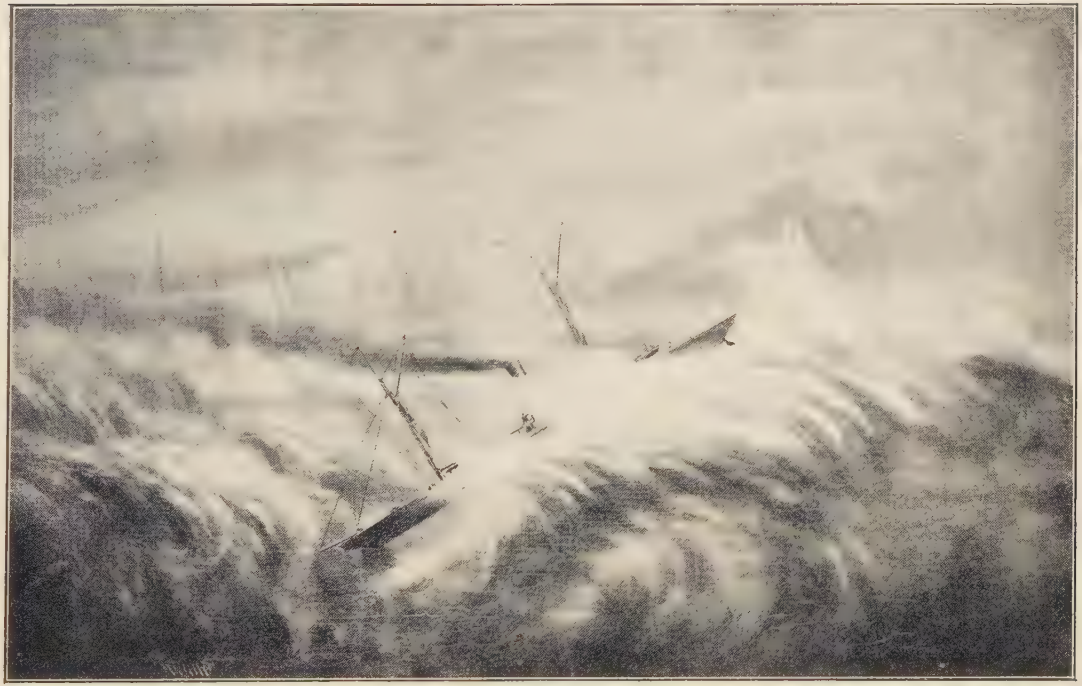
I knew the ropes too well not to foresee the outcome of the weather, and would not have been among the number if I could possibly have avoided it; but some matter of importance called me to Scilly, and I had no option but to go. Time is up! Captain Frank takes his position on the bridge and gives two loud blasts on the steam whistle; the warps are cast off, the fenders taken in-board, the engine-room telegraph put to "stand by," and then to "half-speed ahead," and with a few turns of the screw the *Little Western* glides out of the harbour, and makes her bow to the incoming tide, then about half-flood.

Nothing could have been more propitious than the start. It was a flat calm, and save where the screw churned a slight ripple astern, the sea as smooth as a mill-pond. A long, lazy swell, the pulse of the flowing tide, rose and fell with regular rhythm like the breathing of some giant asleep. On a perfectly level keel, the little craft crossed Gwavas Lake, with Newlyn and its colony of artists in the back-ground, passed Mousehole Island, Castle Treryn with the Logan Rock poised on the top, and had the chair-ladder or Tol-Pedn-Penwith well abeam, before anything occurred to mar the beauty of the scene, or to offend the stomach of the veriest Cockney that ever took a trip from London Bridge to Margate.

Seen under these favourable conditions, from the Scillies to the Shetlands, there are few fairer spots than Mount's Bay. Forming one of the finest sheets of water anywhere around the coast, with a diversity of scenery unrivalled for beauty and grandeur, having surroundings which vie with Naples or Palermo, and a climate possessing all the softness and salubrity of the Riviera, only its distance from the great centres of population prevents Mount's Bay from becoming one of the most popular health resorts in the kingdom. Climatologists say that Mount's Bay is situated in a highly-favoured climatic zone. The range of temperature is remarkably small, and there are none of the extremes of heat and cold so trying to delicate organisms. Fed by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, which, impinging on the Irish coast, are deflected into the English Channel, Mount's Bay is more like the South of France than the rasping air of Cromer and Lowestoft, or the wind-swept chilliness of the east coast. The two horns of the Bay formed by the Lizard and the Land's End, project far out into the Channel, and, on the one hand, protect it from the north and east, and on the other from the prevailing westerly gales. Beetling cliffs like Gunwalloe and Halzafron, clothed with gorse and heather, look down on its placid waters, and the serpentine caves of Kynance echo with the murmur of the sea. All the western shore from Lamorna to Cape Cornwall, scarred and indented in its conflict with the elements, basks in the light of the morning sun; an autumnal glow is over all; light, fleecy clouds, reflected on towering peak, hoary rock, and ripening bracken, chase each other across the sky, and the

SUNRISE: MOUNT'S BAY.

NEAR KYNANCE COVE, THE LIZARD, CORNWALL.



THE "LITTLE WESTERN" IN A GALE.

sea is of that intense blue seen only in these southern latitudes.

We were congratulating ourselves that, after all, the weather prophets were at fault, and we were going to have a fine passage. The sun climbed towards the zenith, and beneath its beams the waters of the Bay danced and sparkled like gems set in an eastern diadem. A "school" of porpoise, following in our wake, shook the phosphorescent sea from their fins in silvery spray as they tumbled and gambolled about; and white-winged gulls screamed and fought in watchful anticipation of the passengers' contribution to their mid-day meal.

Could mischief possibly lurk behind that bank of purple clouds low down on the horizon, and the few "mare's tails" spread out across the western sky? Surely not. Yet, no sooner had we opened up the Brisons and got well clear of the land, than the whole aspect of affairs underwent a sudden change. The barometer, which had been suspiciously high, tumbled down to 29.30. An occasional cat's-paw coming up from the S.S.E., just ruffled the surface and then died away, as if loth to disturb the universal calm. Presently, the wind came in angry puffs from the same quarter, sending the sea flying over the weather bow, and switching aft into the waist. In short, the dreaded south-easter was upon us, and before we got half way across, in the neighbourhood of the Wolf, it blew a whole gale. White horses chased each other in the tide-way, and big "combers" curling over as they approached, smote the little vessel with sledge-hammer force, shaking her from stem to stern, and smothering her fore and aft in tons of foaming water. With stern high in air, screw racing wildly, and deck inclined at an angle of forty-five degrees, she plunged into the trough of the sea, or mounted on the crest, shaking herself free like some sea-bird rising from its bath. It was enough to unnerve the whole bench of Bishops, or to undermine the stability of the Woolsack.

I do not know what my readers will say, but, speaking from a long and somewhat varied experience, I have observed that passengers taking short trips like that to Scilly and the Isle of Man, or crossing the Channel from Dover to Calais, almost invariably resolve themselves into one of two moods. At first they are over confident. "Fools

rush in where angels fear to tread." Sick? No, they are never sick. Afraid of a rough sea? Oh, the rougher it is the better. They strut about the deck as if to the manner born, crack jokes on the weather, smoke strong, rank cigars, and imbibe large quantities of bottled stout and ginger beer to fill an aching void in their internal economy. Probably, not one of them has ever been outside the three mile international limits, and their knowledge of the sea is confined to tea and shrimps at Greenwich, or an excursion to Southend. Yet they talk glibly and learnedly of maritime affairs, boast of their prowess as sailors, and one would think to listen to them that they had weathered a typhoon in the China Sea, or rounded Cape Horn in the depth of winter.

Then comes the cold fit. Life is not worth living. Guinness is an abomination, and aerated waters a snare. The favourite weed is pitched into the lee-scuppers, and the very smell of fat pork (made up in the form of sandwiches) rises their gorge. There is a pinched look about the face, and their complexion turns to a muddy grey, relieved by a yellowish tinge in the region of the nose; and low down in the pit of the stomach, about where in the anatomy of dolls the wax ends and the sawdust begins, there is a commotion which threatens annihilation, sets every pulse throbbing like a sledge-hammer, and shakes the whole frame with convulsive spasms. With legs wide apart, and head "all of a swim," they clutch at any object, animate or inanimate, to try and maintain an unsteady equilibrium, or lie about limp and inarticulate, pictures of human misery. The sea rises up to meet the ship, and the ship dives down to meet the sea, in a kind of infernal see-saw, and everything is blurred and jaundiced. Abject calls for the steward are mingled with the groans, and as that necessary functionary, like a bird of ill-omen, hovers around dispensing his tin utensils in view of certain contingencies—and his practised eye is seldom at fault—one may rest assured that the catastrophe so many dread and which so few are able to avert is close at hand.

The Lord Bishop of Truro stuck manfully to his post, though the deck was wet and slippery, and afforded but a precarious foothold. The *Little Western* tossed and rolled like a cork caught in an eddy, and every now and then his Lordship took a wild plunge to leeward, bringing himself

up with a round turn as he clutched frantically at the companion-rail. His dripping locks, escaping from under the canonical hat, streamed away in the wind in tangled wisps, and his ruddy countenance, usually so calm and placid, was drawn and anxious. Father Neptune was shaking his trident at the Church, and it was a mountain to a nutmeg that the old sea-god would get the best of it. For the sea is no respecter of persons, and the freaks of "Little Mary" are pretty much the same under the broadcloth of a Bishop and the smock-frock of John Hodge. That peculiar up and down motion; that feeling that the earth is slipping away beneath one's feet, and the desire to shuffle off this mortal coil and have done with it, is felt alike by peer and peasant, and afflicts both the just and the unjust.

For a landsman, accustomed to nothing more disturbing than the jolting of a tramcar, or the undulations of a South-Eastern train, there is always the glorious uncertainty whether one's digestive apparatus will accommodate itself to its new surroundings, and rise superior to its unstable environment, or, breaking into open rebellion, make life at sea one long drawn-out agony. Most of us have been there or thereabout, and it is therefore casting no reflection on the Bishop's courage to say that, in the end, he threw up the sponge, and was gently led away below, drenched and dishevelled, a poor, limp specimen of humanity, scarcely recognisable as the befrocked and befrilled magnate of the Christian hierarchy.

Let us draw a veil over the rest of the voyage. There are woes too deep for mortal mind to fathom, too awful and profound for mortal eye to ken. There are times when hope seems dead, and the stricken soul looks out upon the world in blank despair. Anyone who has ever been in the grip of the demon of sea-sickness, with the fiend gnawing at his vitals, twisting the whole of his alimentary canal up into knots, and resolved to exact toll and tribute to the very uttermost farthing, will readily understand that, in the throes of this distressing malady—so apt to excite the hilarity of onlookers—shut up in a close, stuffy cabin, redolent of odours from bilge and engine-room, and reeking with sundry other evil and unsavoury smells, Dr. Benson had pretty well plumbed the depths of human misery, and robbed death of its terrors. In about another

two hours we had threshed our way to St. Marys through Crow Sound and tied up at the Pier. Mr. Smith, in his steam launch, was waiting to take his visitor to Tresco; and in reply to an inquiry as to what sort of passage he had had, the Bishop said, with a sickly smile, that before he started he much feared that he would be drowned; when he got half way across he prayed that he might be; and at that moment, feeling more dead than alive, he was haunted with the dread of how in the world he was to get back again. This was the first and last time Dr. Benson ever visited Scilly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Scilly Industries:—Shipping.

SCILLY has seen many changes and passed through many vicissitudes. When I first knew it ship-building was the principal industry. There would be half a dozen vessels on the stocks at the same time, varying in size from a sloop to a barque, and all in various stages of construction. The crack of the serving-mallet, and the ring of the caulking-iron—welcome music which went up from a hundred ship-yards throughout the length and breadth of the land—were heard on every side; workmen drove home the trenails, and shaped the planks to the frame-work of the ship, and there was a grateful odour of Stockholm pitch about which betokened business activity. This also gave employment to other kindred trades such as riggers, sail-makers, blacksmiths, joiners and painters, and, taken altogether, Scilly was as busy and thriving a little place as one could wish to see.

We have altered all that. The old commercial dock-yard, generally planted on the banks of a navigable river, and turning out ships which were the envy of the world, has disappeared. The craftsmen, who with chisel and adge moulded and fashioned the structure, and spread our fame as ship-builders to the very ends of the earth, are gone—transformed into mere automatons watching the movements of some self-acting machine. All the poetry, all the romance of ship-construction—the symmetrical hull, the tapering mast, and spread of billowing canvas—have departed, and in their place we have the huge liner, and the dirty ocean tramp; useful no doubt, and adapted to our needs, but certainly not a thing of beauty. "Handsome is that handsome does." We have no time to linger over the aesthetic, and as the iron monsters rise, rib after rib, and plate after plate, to the chorus of an army of rivetters in some ship-yard on the Clyde, the Humber, or the Tyne, we may congratulate ourselves that, in the matter of ship-building at any rate, we are not being outdistanced by the foreigner.

Fortunately, the output of our ship-building yards continues to be satisfactory, and we are holding our own among the mercantile navies of the world. Yet the situation is not altogether free from danger. We do not occupy that commanding position once conceded us as a right. The gap which separates us from our competitors is being gradually narrowed, and trade routes are being invaded where, since the days of steam at all events, we have virtually held a monoply. Take the India, China, and Australian trade, for instance. There was a time when it was a very rare thing indeed to see a foreign bottom in Bombay or Calcutta, Shanghai or Sydney. They are now elbowing us out of the place.* London and Liverpool were once the two great centres and *entrepots* of commerce, and into them flowed the fructifying stream from every quarter of the habitable globe. What are the facts to-day? Bremen, Hamburg, and other Continental ports are running us very close for the blue ribbon of the world's tonnage, and, in the battle of trade, not to be first is to be lost. It is not enough merely to "mark time." Unless we are advancing, we are losing ground, and all history, from Rome to Carthage, and from Spain to Portugal, warns us that stagnation means decay. Whoever would have dreamt, thirty years ago, that the Yankees and the Germans would have carried off so large a share of the Trans-Atlantic traffic? Cunard's, and the other great firms sailing from Liverpool, were things to swear by, and were fed by subsidiary lines to the Mediterranean and the Continent, which fetched and carried all the goods and passengers destined for the United States and the great North-West. Now, we have to scramble for what we can catch, and what with combines and subsidies, are being driven out of the field. I never thought I should live to see the day when the bulk of American passengers—and Brother Sam is very sweet on going to "Europe"—would be landed at Plymouth, and other English Channel ports, by vessels sailing under a foreign flag.

At one time, old wooden line of battleships like the *Queen* and the *Hibernia*, ponderous and wall-sided, held the field, and were accounted marvels of naval

* Mr. Lyne, one of the delegates from New South Wales at the recent Imperial Conference, stated that when he left Sydney more than one-half of the shipping in the harbour were foreigners.

architecture. When clipper-ships like the *Lightning* and the *Red Jacket*, took one hundred and twenty days on the voyage to Melbourne, and were thought to have broken the record. When the old East Indiaman, threshing her way down around the Cape, astonished both owners and underwriters if she was reported off the Nore any time within four months. Steam was in its infancy, and long afterwards, at the time of the Confederate War, the crack craft of the Cunard fleet was the old paddle-wheeler Persian, commanded by Captain Jutkins, who thought himself fortunate if he covered the distance between Sandy Hook and Roches Point in a fortnight.

Of course there were no cables, and those whose memory carries them back to the early sixties, will remember the struggle there was to obtain early information. Sealed packets containing the latest news were thrown overboard off Queenstown, picked up by tugs, and the contents promptly wired to London. The Press has made enormous strides in the last forty or fifty years, and has now, seemingly, entered on the stage of pars and snippets; but, with the means at their disposal, it may be doubted whether papers like "The Times," "The Daily Telegraph," and "The Standard," did not cater for the public just as efficiently as at present, when they are in touch by cable with the whole world. At any rate, we had a sober narrative of facts, without the blood-curdling head-lines and exaggerated style indulged in by a certain class of journals to-day.

We inherited the art of shipbuilding from our Northern ancestors, and, time out of mind, a British ship, built under Lloyds' survey, and properly classed, fetched the highest price, and commanded the biggest freight all the world over. We were the great ocean carriers, and wherever there was a region to explore, or a market to be opened up, the English merchant, and the English master mariner were sure to be on the spot, ready to traffic with the natives, and to convey the products of many climes to our far-distant shores. It was this spirit of enterprise, and love of adventure, which gave us India, and planted our Colonies out from the Equator to the Poles. Other nationalties like the French and the Italians, the German Eagle, and the Russian Bear, were content to follow in our footsteps, and to pick up any unconsidered trifles left

in the wake of the all-conquering race. In maritime affairs our flag floated proudly over every sea, and our ports were the Emporium for the markets of the World.

But alas! This pre-eminence is no longer ours. Causes are at work tending to undermine our supremacy, and the drift of modern legislation is all in favour of the foreigner. This is more particularly observable with respect to shipping. Miserable rattle-traps which have run off the first letter, and are no longer insurable except at increased risks, are eagerly caught up by our rivals, and, untrammelled by load-lines, Board of Trade regulations, or Navigation Laws, manned as they like, and victualled as they like, at once enter into unfair competition with the harassed, heavily-taxed Britisher. And, while they enjoy the free use of our ports, and the privileges of an open market, no sooner does an English ship enter a foreign port than she is taxed from truck to keelson, and every commodity she carries laid under heavy contribution.

Even our coasting trade is invaded. Worn-out old crocks on which no self-respecting seaman would trust his skin, lie on the berth, and carry goods from one part of the United Kingdom to another, and from Colony to Colony, at rates with which the British ship-owner is unable to compete, while the ports of every other country are closed to him. The Yankee protects his coast from New York to San Francisco, and the French call Algeria part of French soil. Is it any wonder that shipping decays, or that we are losing our grip on the markets both at home and abroad?

Time was when the rising generation of Englishmen took to the sea like a spaniel takes to the water. Every ship had her complement of apprentices, and carried a full crew of native-born A.B.'s before the mast. In every fishing village from Sennen to Wick, we bred seamen and could hold our heads high as worthy descendants of the old sea-kings from whom we sprung. What is the case to-day? Why the race of British seamen is rapidly dying out, and the dwindling residue that remain are no more like the jolly tars of fifty years ago than a Lee-Metford rifle is like the old flint-lock Brown Bess. I doubt whether ten per cent. of them can splice a rope, take in the flying jib in a breeze, or lay out on the yard-arm and haul in the

weather clewline. In short, they are not seamen, but mere deck-hands and greasers.

The most lamentable feature of the case is that we absolutely discourage the making of seamen. The old law as to apprentices has been abrogated, and owners now have the option of carrying them or not. Apprentices are the nursery of the service, and without a well-stocked nursery, there can be no healthy increase either of a nation or a class. With the exception of one or two training ships stationed here and there, no inducement whatever is held out to boys to go to sea, and hence many of them grow up wastrels, and go to swell the ranks of the unemployed. The great recruiting ground for our mercantile marine should be among the working classes, but what do we see? Youths educated at the public expense, and trained for positions far above their station, crowd the markets for clerks, shopmen, and other unproductive callings, but shun the sea like poison.

And, while this thing goes on in broad daylight, and its effects on our future as a nation are palpable, and writ so large that he who runs may read, we are so wedded to an effete and worn-out system that we go blundering along regardless, apparently, of the goal to which we are hastening. Year after year our ships are being manned by aliens in an ever-increasing quantity. Year after year we are being throttled by hostile tariffs, and having the doors of fair-trade slammed in our face. The very men who eat our salt will be the first to desert us in the hour of difficulty, and carry the experience they have gained in our service over to the enemy.

The Scillonians were almost the first to feel the effects of this suicidal policy. They had built up quite a respectable fleet of sailing vessels, which were owned and victualled at Scilly. Clipper schooners ran to Lisbon and the Azores for fruit, and trim little barques traded with the West Indies, or brought home grain from the Black Sea. All the re-fitting and ship's husbanding were done at Scilly, and as the crews were mostly natives this circulated a good bit of money, and gave employment all round. But, in the end, up went the broom at the mast-head, and one by one the ships had to be sold. They could not live under the fierce competition of steam, and the preference shewn to the foreigner. The crews drifted

away to other ports, and the officers were eagerly caught up by leading shipping firms elsewhere, who knew the value of the Scillonian as a practical seaman.

CHAPTER XIX.

Scilly Industries Continued:—Potatoes.

WHEN shipping failed them it became a very serious question for the Scillonians as to what should take its place. There were nearly two thousand mouths to feed, and their only means of support hung on a single string. They had embarked their little capital in a venture which had crumbled away under their feet, and were now left idle and stranded. The yards had to be closed, and the slipways, which had been the cradle of many a good ship, lay empty and deserted. It therefore behoved the men of Scilly to bestir themselves, and seeing that trade, or manufactories of any kind, were entirely out of the question, they naturally turned their attention to agriculture as the bed-rock of all their hopes. But, even here, the prospects were not at all reassuring. The land is too poor for corn to be grown at a profit; fruit, such as plums, cherries, and peaches will not stone in the climate, and apples and pears require shelter which the Islands do not afford. There was, however, a well-known tuber, which the Irish, at all events, have learnt to appreciate, and which, next to bread itself, forms the chief mainstay of their lives—the potato. So the Scillonians went in for potato culture, and devoted every inch of ground to its production.

For many years this was a very profitable industry. The crop matured at least a month in advance of any other source of supply on the mainland, and coming in at a time when the last year's stock was getting exhausted, commanded a tip-top price. The potato flourishes at Scilly. The climate suits it, and the soil is of that light, friable nature in which the plant delights. Frost, the great enemy of the potato grower, need not be reckoned with; and that mysterious disease or blight, which devastated Ireland, and wrought such havoc in almost every other part of the country, seldom or ever appears at Scilly. The only thing to be dreaded is a westerly gale, which whips the

young growth, batters it about, and checks the formation of the tuber.

The mode of cultivation differs somewhat to that pursued on the mainland. Instead of being planted in deep furrows, or dibbled in with a hoe, the seed is placed in shallow trenches, or "voores," about the width of the spade apart, and covered over lightly with soil. In the fall of the year —generally about the end of October—the seed is arranged in hollow racks or trays in an outhouse, protected from the light, but with plenty of ventilation. By the time the planting season arrives, the eyes have sprouted about an inch or so, and the sets are then carefully divided, with at least two eyes to each set. Planting begins about the latter part of February, or early in March, and in some six or seven weeks the crop is ready for market.

Strangely enough, the Cornish grower never saves his own seed. Ground is too valuable to allow the crop to ripen, and as soon as the potatoes are lifted, broccoli or mangolds are dibbled in on their heels. The farmer thus gets two crops a year out of the land, and this enables him to pay his heavy rent and taxes, amounting, in many cases, to over £10 an acre. There is also an impression that change of seed gives vigour to the plant, and assists it to resist disease. Seed potatoes are mostly imported from Lincolnshire, the Ash-leaf kidney at one time being a favourite variety. Many hundreds of tons are every year brought into Cornwall in this way, both by water and by rail, and create quite a busy trade.

Scilly and the Channel Islands at one time virtually had a monoply of the early potato trade. But alas! these halcyon days have gone never to return. Potatoes now reach us from Malta, Algiers, and other places along the Mediterranean sea-board, long before they can be grown under the most favourable conditions in these northern latitudes. And, over and above the climatic advantages he enjoys, the foreigner beats us in the matter of carriage. Probably, the freight on sea-borne potatoes reaching this country does not exceed 30s. per ton, whereas the rate from Scilly to London is 45s. a ton. This is a terrible tax, and in fact is killing the industry. Formerly, the total output of early potatoes from Scilly was close on 1,000 tons annually; but this has been reduced to less than one half, and is still a diminishing quantity.

In its palmy days the potato harvest at Scilly was the great event of the year. Gangs of diggers were brought across from the mainland, and every able-bodied hand was engaged in marketing the crop. Long strings of carts bringing in the produce of the country, crowded the quay, and tailed away far up into the street: and boats from the off islands clustered like bees around the little steamer lying on the berth for Penzance, until she was laden like a sand-barge, having little more than her gunwale as a free-board. Hampers of potatoes were piled high above the deck, and filled every nook and cranny below. The town was like a fair. Buyers attended from Covent Garden and all the principal markets, and outbid each other as to who should secure the first consignments. The price varies with the season. I have known the farmers get back as much as 3d. per lb. for early samples. Now, he thinks himself lucky if he can get a penny a pound, and as this barely covers the heavy railway charges and the cost of raising, the potato, instead of being the sheet-anchor of the Scillonians, is only grown on ground unsuitable to carry other crops.

It is difficult to see what can be done to arrest this rot. Scilly will always remain on the very outskirts of commerce, and must pay the penalty of its inaccessibility. Time and space are factors not to be ignored. Even Jersey and Guernsey, in this respect, have a decided advantage over Scilly:—the potato crop comes in at least a fortnight earlier, and they are much nearer the principal markets. Both are served by excellent lines of steamers working in conjunction with two main lines of railways, and I believe the companies do everything possible to foster the trade. But, unfortunately, railway companies are not philanthropists. and must have an eye to the interests of their shareholders. This involves rates which yield a dividend, and, undoubtedly, these rates frequently press very hard on the trading community, and especially on agriculturists.

The State has invested the railway companies with the monopoly of our carrying trade on the implied understanding that they will hold the balance evenly between one class of customers and another. But it is hard, sometimes, to see where the equity comes in, when it is possible for foreign produce to be dumped down in our markets at

rates considerably less than the same class of goods can be carried, say, from Cornwall to London. A committee presided over by Lord Jersey, dealing with the question, has recently reported that the fault lies, not so much with the railway companies as with the consignors, who will persist in sending their consignments in small quantities, instead of combining together and aggregating their produce into larger lots. This is all very well, but the Committee do not appear to have had sufficient regard to local circumstances and surroundings. In a place like Scilly, for instance, parcelled out into small holdings, where every man is jealous of the doings of his neighbour, it is obviously impracticable, in all cases, to carry this co-operative principle into effect; and it is poor consolation to the struggling farmer to be told that he must think in tons when his acreage confines him to cwts.

It is not alone at Scilly that the farmer is handicapped by distance, and the excessive rates charged for the transit of his produce. On the mainland, in the neighbourhood of Penzance, market gardening is one of the principal industries, and I know as a matter of fact that, after he has been skinned by the wholesale salesman, and flayed alive by the railway companies, there is often nothing left for the producer but the husks for all his labour. I have known cases where crates of broccoli, containing from eight to twelve dozen heads each, have been sent away from Penzance, say, to Liverpool or Manchester, and by the time railway charges, commission, and other outgoings have been satisfied, all the consignor got back was 10d. a crate! In the shape of potatoes, broccoli, and fruit—to say nothing of beef and dairy produce—West Cornwall farmers export tens of thousands of pounds worth of stuff annually, enriching the railway company, and helping to feed the urban population. But he is kept poor, first by the exactions of the State, secondly by the burden of local taxation, thirdly by railway monopolies, and last, but not least, by the preferential treatment given to the foreigner. In cattle he has to compete with the United States and Argentina; for butter he is undersold by the Danes; eggs come from Russia, and fruit and vegetables from Holland and Belgium. Not one of these contributes a single farthing to the upkeep of the country, and the profits on all these commodities are spent abroad. How much longer is the bitter cry of the distressed British

agriculturist to go up to an unsympathetic Government, and when will the scales fall from our eyes, and enable us to see that we are nursing a phantom? Surely those whom the gods mean to destroy they first drive mad.

CHAPTER XX.

Scilly Industries Continued:—Fishing.

WHERE fish and fishing are concerned, there is, perhaps, no other country more deeply interested, or having larger issues at stake than our own. Around the coast of the United Kingdom from Newlyn to Aberdeen, and from Bantry Bay to Lough Swilly, there must be many thousands of our people entirely dependent on fishing for a livelihood. Whether it be the pilchard and mackerel in Cornwall, the haddock in Scotland, the herring at Yarmouth, or ground fish like the sole caught in such large numbers on the Dogger Bank, the take is enormous, and, in one form and another, constitutes a highly lucrative industry running into millions every year. This is confirmed by the Board of Trade returns, though, as a matter of fact, these returns are not always reliable, and do not by any means represent the actual figures. It is notorious that many of the statistics compiled by the Board of Trade are not as accurate as they might be.

Now, seeing that Scilly is surrounded by the warm waters of the Channel, and situated on ground most congenial for the breeding of fish, one would naturally suppose that fishing is a flourishing industry. This, however, is not so. It is a case of matter in the wrong place. All round the Islands the sea swarms with fish, yet, for many years, the fishery remained entirely neglected, or was worked in a perfunctory and spasmodic manner, according to local requirements. What was the use of catching the fish when there was no market for them? So, having laid in their stock of "buckhorn" to carry them over the winter, and "whiffed" for a few summer mackerel, which frequent the various Sounds, the natives took no further heed of the teeming millions of bass, pollack, whiting, ling and conger, which gambolled around the coast, or lay in ambush among the rocks. True, the keepers on the Seven Stones Lightship set their lines for ling, and did a good trade by salting them down, and selling them when they came on shore. These fish are very

MOUNT'S BAY FISHING BOATS BOUND FOR THE MACKEREL GROUND.

much esteemed on the mainland, especially during Lent, and, in common with the Newfoundland cod, are known locally as "niffling." Crabbers from the Eastern ports also visited Scilly occasionally, and taking advantage of its isolated position, drove a very hard bargain for such lobsters, crabs, and crays as had been captured in the pots, or allowed to accumulate in the pools or "graves." The usual price was 4s. a dozen, fish below a certain size counted two for one. This was not a bad stroke of business, as making every allowance for the difficulty of getting the fish to market, lobsters at 4d. a piece were ridiculously cheap, and a considerable margin of profit must have stuck to the fingers of the middleman. Probably, the West-ender would be charged at least 2s. 6d. for the very same fish. But beyond this, and a small business in shrimps and prawns, which found a ready sale on the mainland, the Scilly fishery did not count for much.

Of late years, however, there has been a decided improvement. Scilly is more in touch with the markets, and there is a possibility of distributing the fish within a reasonable time of their being caught. The principal trade is in mackerel, and of all the fish that swim, not one, probably, deteriorates so rapidly in value, or requires to be eaten immediately it is out of the water. Fishermen say that to enjoy the flavour of a mackerel it should be taken straight from the net and at once clapped into the pot. A stale mackerel is positively poisonous, and when one sees them exposed for sale on fishmongers' stalls and costers' barrows, dark, limp, and "shotten," one wonders that the mischief is not greater. People living in inland towns require a good deal of moral courage to consume mackerel at all, as they are mostly in a state of decomposition.

The mackerel frequents the English Channel in the early spring in enormous quantities, and is preyed upon by fish and fowl. Hake, in large numbers, harry the shoals, and flocks of sea-birds dip into the struggling masses as the fish are driven to the surface by their aquatic foes. Man, whose hand is against everything in Nature, also levies a heavy toll, following the fish right away from the North Sea. First, the east coast fisherman spreads his nets across their course, meshing as many as luck or fortune sends in his way. Then, all along the southern sea-board from Beachy Head to the Start, boats armed with various

implements of destruction put off with murderous intent, and take their share of this piscatorial harvest. So that by the time the fish reach the warm water at the mouth of the Channel, many enemies have laid them under contribution, but without seriously diminishing the density of the shoals. Plymouth, however, is their Sedan. Here, the native craft, augmented by drifters from Looe, Polperro, and Fowey, and the whole of the Mount's Bay fleet, sally forth to give battle to the finny host, and smiting them in front, flank, and rear, do terrible execution. The carnage is awful: nets glitter with the carcases of the slain, and thousands of stiffened bodies are landed at the Barbican every morning, and forthwith despatched to Billingsgate. Rallying their scattered forces, the fish beat a retreat to the neighbourhood of the Lizard, only to be met and intercepted by boats from Falmouth, Penzance, and St. Ives, till finally, with ranks sadly depleted, they seek refuge in deep water around Scilly.

The mackerel season extends from February to June. During the first two or three months Newlyn is the head-quarters, and all the Mount's Bay boats, swelled by a large number of East countrymen, and a sprinkling of Frenchmen, fish from there. The fish are found mostly in-shore, roughly within a line drawn from the Lizard to the Wolf, and generally not in large quantities. The average catch at this period will not exceed a thousand per boat, and many nights the fleet will come back "clean." Accordingly, prices rule high, the fish sometimes making as much as 50s. the long hundred. The movements of the fish appear to be affected by the temperature of the water, and it is observed that, during a cold snap, or the prevalence of an easterly wind, it is difficult to mesh them at all. As the season advances the shoals get larger and range further afield, the fishing ground extending many leagues out at sea. At last, the difficulty of saving the market is so great, that Newlyn has to be abandoned, and the whole fleet, with salesmen, buyers, packers, and hangers-on, betake themselves to Scilly.

The fish are now found far away to the westward, and spread over a wide area. Until the advent of the steam drifter, which is independent of wind and tide, the problem was how to get at the fish, and arrive back at the base in time to save the next morning's steamer. Everything

A FREE SHEET, AND A SUN-LIT SEA.

depended on this. If the steamer was caught, the fish probably fetched from 10s. to £1 a hundred according to quantity and quality; but late, or "over-day" fish, were knocked down to 6s. or even to 2s. or 3s. a hundred, and were a drug in the market.

It is here that pace and seamanship come in. The Cornish boats are mostly lug-rigged, with shifting ballast, and sail like yachts. It was a pretty sight to see these smartly handled little craft, their tan-coloured sails lit up by the morning sun, running for Scilly from every point of the compass. They had shot their nets, perhaps fifty or sixty miles away, and it was a race against time. Close-hauled, or what is better, with the wind a little abaft the beam, they tear along, flinging the spray from their bows, and leaving a line of seething water in their wake. Each boat, as she comes in sight, hoists a signal at the mast-head to denote the amount of her catch. This is done by a string of fish-pads, each pad representing a thousand fish. This enables the salesman, and the stevedore on board the steamer, to estimate their requirements, and to make arrangements for packing and stowing immediately the boat touches the pier. Indeed, the fish are frequently met out in the pool, and the selling and packing done there.

The fish are sold by auction, buyers and salesmen following the fleet about from point to point. They are then packed into pads or boxes containing from fifty to sixty fish, and hurried off by steamer and rail to Billingsgate. I have known as many as 150,000 mackerel landed at Scilly of a morning, and at an average price of 10s. per hundred of one hundred and twenty fish, or, say, a penny a piece, this would represent over £600, as the result of a single night's catch. The aggregate number of pads exported varies according to the season, ranging as high as 30,000 in a good season, down to 7,000 in a bad one; but, taking the mean as 18,500 pads, each pad weighing a ½cwt., or forty to the ton, it shows the total output as something like 500 tons, and the money value as close upon £10,000. And, be it remembered, this is at Scilly alone. I have not the figures for Plymouth, Newlyn, and St. Ives by me, but seeing that the bulk of the fishing is done at these ports, it would not be far wrong to estimate the total value of the spring mackerel fishery at £50,000. It is one of the principal industries in the West of England, and on its

success depends the living capacity of the fishing population for the rest of the year.

This living capacity, at the best, is very precarious and subject to violent fluctuations. The Cornish fisherman is not like the ordinary wage-earner who gets his day's pay irrespective of the result of his labour. He is a co-adventurer with the owner of the boat, and—no fish no wages. The system is to work in shares, so many being allocated to the boat, so many to the nets and gear, and the rest divided up among the crew. A man may only have his two hands to fall back upon, or he may own one or more nets which increases his interest in the concern. But, in any case, his earnings depend on wind, weather, and to a great extent on luck, all, proverbially, most uncertain factors. It is therefore all the more necessary that he should not be unfairly handicapped. As a matter of fact, he is entirely in the hands of the middleman, and to shew what a gulf there is between the producer and the consumer, a Mount's Bay mackerel (and wherever they are caught they are always called Mount's Bay) returning only a penny to the struggling, hard-toiling fisherman, cannot be bought at a West-end fishmonger's for less than 6d. and then he vows he is selling at a loss.

But the heaviest tax on the poor fisherman is the cost of getting his fish to market. Taking the rate from Scilly to Billingsgate at £4 a ton (it used to be £5 or £6) of forty pads, each pad containing sixty, or half a hundred fish, (and this is about the average), it will be seen that the charge for transit alone amounts to 2s. a pad, or 4s. a hundred, equal to nearly one-half of the prime value of the article. The consequence is that, very frequently, when the catch is heavy and the price low, the fish are not worth marketing, and have to be thrown back into the sea. This is an economic question which affects not only the parties concerned, but reacts on the interests of the Commonwealth. Enormous quantities of cheap, wholesome food, which should yield to the toiler at least a "living wage," and which might help to feed the poverty-stricken masses crowding our prisons and workhouses, is wasted—literally thrown away because it cannot stand the crushing toll imposed upon it.*

* During the mackerel season just closed, the glut of fish was so great that nobody would bid for them. The steam drifters landed at Newlyn, in the

FISHING BOATS RUNNING FOR SCILLY TO CATCH THE STEAMER.

THE POOL, ST. MARYS, SCILLY: FISHING BOATS AT ANCHOR.

I suppose if we could put back the hands of the clock for fifty years or so things would be different. We should not be so short-sighted as to oppose the introduction of railways; to let lawyers, contractors, engineers, and landlords grow fat over the spoil, and so pile up the cost of construction that nearly every line we possess is enormously over-capitalised. We should never allow two or three trunk lines to be built where one would do; we should have retained some sort of control over these great arteries of inter-communication, and have seen to it that the burden of rates was fitted to the back which has to bear it. But all this is crying over spilt milk, and the only thing to be done is to brace ourselves up for the struggle, and to make the best of a bad bargain. The railway companies, like the old man in Sinbad the Sailor, are astride our backs, and there is no means of getting rid of the incubus without violating a solemn compact entered into between the companies and the State. If ever the day arrives—which is very doubtful—when it is possible to nationalise the railways, perhaps there may be some improvement; but, judging from our experience of how other Government monopolies are worked, it is more than likely we should only be exchanging King Log for King Stork.

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course of a single week, over 4,000,000 fish, and in consequence they were a drug in the market. Tens, if not hundreds of thousands, were thrown overboard for want of purchasers. Yet, for the local fishermen, the season was the worst ever known. They could not compete with the steam drifters, and by the time their catch arrived it was practically valueless.

CHAPTER XXI.

Scilly Industries Continued: The Flower Trade.

WITH shipping as dead as Queen Anne, potatoes gone to the dogs, and fishing, as we have seen, carried on under conditions which point to its ultimate extinction, the prospect for the Scillonians was by no means rosy. One after another the standard industries had fallen away; prop after prop had been knocked from under them, and they were now, apparently, face to face with a period of stagnation which threatened to have a very serious effect on the future of the Islands. But every cloud has a silver lining; it is always darkest before dawn, and when things are at their worst they are bound to mend. That mysterious law of compensation, running like a golden thread through all human affairs, came to their aid, and, as is so frequently the case when we poor mortals are groping about into the unknown without being able to lift the veil, or to foresee the course of events, it turned out that the Scillonians were on the eve of a discovery which, for the time at least, has altered the whole aspect of things, and started them once more on the high road to prosperity.

In a manner almost indigenous to the Islands, and growing wild outside every cottage door, there was a common kind of narcissus known as "Scilly whites." The flowers came up in the early spring and died away without attracting any particular attention, and, save for their sweet perfume, nobody ever gave them a thought. Had anyone ventured to hint that, in this modest, innocent-looking flower lay the germ of a great industry, which was to lift Scilly out of the dust, and revolutionise the whole current of its trade, he would have been deemed little better than a lunatic, and a fit subject for confinement in Colney Hatch. Yet so it was. Seeing the rage there was for all kinds of flowers, and especially for white flowers, it occurred to one of the Islanders—the late Mr. W. Trevillick of Rocky Hill—that, perhaps, there might be a market for such an unpretentious variety as Scilly whites. So, as a specula-

A SCILLY FLOWER FARM: PICKERS AT WORK.

A SCILLY FLOWER FARM: FIELD OF ORNATUS.

tion, he gathered a few bunches, packed them into a hamper, and sent them off to Covent Garden. Much to his surprise, after paying freight, railway carriage, and commission, he was left with a very fair margin of profit. Others soon followed his example, and thus were laid the foundations of the Scilly flower trade which has now attained such considerable proportions.

The cultivation of the narcissus and other bulbous plants for the market in this country is, I believe, of comparatively recent growth. Such supplies as were forthcoming reached us from the Continent, and were beyond the reach of the ordinary consumer. Thirty years ago, it was unheard of for delicately nurtured flowers like the jonquil and the narcissus, to be exposed for sale in florists' windows, or hawked about on costers' barrows in mid-winter. They were mostly reserved for Church and table decoration, and fetched such fancy prices as to be unattainable except by the well-to-do. But with the onward march of the democracy came a desire to participate in some of the vanities of life, and, nowaday, there is hardly a clerk or a mechanic who does not invest a few coppers in decorating his room with these sweet-scented harbingers of spring.

Scilly was almost the first in the field to meet this demand, and as demand always has the effect of stimulating supply, the Scillonians took the tide at the flood, and devoted all their energies to catering for this new-born love for flowers. St. Marys talked of nothing else, St. Martins and St. Agnes caught the infection, and Tresco was inoculated with the same disease. Indeed, the late Governor, Mr. Augustus Smith, was one of the earliest growers.

The climate and soil of Scilly are congenial to bulb culture, and the flowers attain great perfection in the soft, balmy air. Starting with the despised Scilly whites, the farmers soon had these taken up and divided so as to increase the yield, and by the time another season came around, the out-put was so much larger that they were able to send considerable consignments, not only to London, but as far north as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Scilly flowers were in the market long before any other home-grown stuff could compete with them, and fetched such prices that the Scillonians were fairly astonished at the success of the

venture. As time went on, other varieties were introduced, and now, I believe, there are over two hundred sorts under cultivation.

The bulbs are planted in specially prepared beds, in rows from six to nine inches apart. The beds are renewed every third year. This is necessary to retain the vigour of the plant, as if allowed to remain too long without lifting, the bulbs crowd each other, and send up barren and feeble shoots. When the bulbs are lifted, they are divided, and any surplus stock either sold or replanted in fresh ground. The beds require very little attention further than being kept free from weeds, and having a top-dressing of stable litter or freshly-gathered seaweed. Bulbs will not stand forcing, and are always sturdier and more robust when grown in the open. Some of the rarer sorts, however, need to be sheltered from the cold, nipping winds, and to afford this protection, the farmers erect wattle fences, and grow dwarf hedges of escalonia and veronica as a screen.

At Tresco, the gardener adopted the plan of planting the bulbs in shallow boxes, and at the critical time, when they required a little artificial heat to develop the buds, he brought the boxes into a greenhouse for a few days, and thus stole a march on the season. But the handling of so many hundred boxes was laborious work, and, besides, the bulbs never thoroughly matured in this way. So, like George Stephenson and the crooked cucumbers, Mr. Smith's gardener set to work to devise some means for "botherin' 'em"; and the thought occurred to him whether it would not be possible to bring the protection to the bulbs, instead of carrying the bulbs to the protection. Accordingly, he had constructed a number of portable glass houses mounted on wheels, and by simply trundling these houses over the beds the thing was done. This was a "wrinkle" I never remember having seen adopted elsewhere, and I make a present of it to any seeker after garden novelties. These movable houses are, I believe, in use at Tresco to this day.

The Scilly flower gardens, crowning each slope, and occupying every coign of vantage, must be seen to be appreciated. Any picture of them, however much overdrawn, would be but a miserable counterfeit, and fail to convey the least idea of what they are really like. I have seen the Islands of the Grecian Archipelago with their

groves of olives and myrtles, basking in a cloudless sky, and washed by the blue waters of the Mediterranean; I have stood on the steps of the Mosque of St. Sophia at Stamboul, and gazed on the beauties of the Golden Horn; I have visited the sweet waters of Europe nestling amidst the surrounding hills, calm as a lake on whose surface not a ripple stirs, and I have rowed up the fabled Bosphorous with a continent on either hand. But never have I seen anything half so lovely as the Scilly flower gardens in early spring when they are in full bloom.

The flowers are grown in narrow strips, sheltered from the wind by dwarf hedges, and within these enclosures, thousands upon thousands of paper-white, pheasant-eye, and other varieties of the narcissus, and trumpet-shaped daffodils of exquisite form and colour, unfold their petals to the sun, and flash across the landscape in bands of white and gold. The ground is covered as with a carpet, the green woof splashed with a pattern drawn by Nature's own hand and bordered by the grey, lichen-covered rocks. As the eye wanders over this wealth of budding sweetness, these smiling fields basking in the soft light of the new-born year, and distilling their perfume to the breeze, it is difficult to realise that, here in the North Atlantic, the very cradle of storms, such climatic conditions can obtain as to produce these marvellous results. When it is remembered that Scilly is only forty miles or so from frost-bound England, still locked in winter's embrace, and within easy distance of sooty, dirt-ridden London, weltering in slush, and choked by fog; and equally near the grimy Midlands, belching forth suffocating fumes of fire and smoke, it is a revelation to us poor mortals, dwelling under sunless skies, to find that such a Utopia as this exists almost at our very doors.

The flower harvest begins soon after Christmas, at a time when, on this side of the water, we are nursing our chilblains, and our noses are blue with the cold. At first, only a single bloom here and there is dotted over the fields —the advance guard, as it were, of a mighty host. Then, presently, the flowers appear in clumps of twos and threes, like the Grenadier companies of a regiment marching at the head of an army to spy out the land; till at length, in the course of a week or so, in gardens which are exposed to the full rays of the sun, the fragrant blossoms cover the

ground thick as poppies in the corn, or buttercups in spring. The picking is mostly done by women and girls, who carry large baskets slung over their shoulder. They move about nimbly among the beds, selecting only such buds as are fit for the market. Indiscriminate picking spoils the crop. The beds are gone over again and again until the supply is exhausted, and other bulbs begin to form on the parent plant.

Cornish girls are famed for their beauty all the world over. To attempt to describe it is like painting the lily, or adding perfume to the rose. It has all the voluptuousness of the South, with the perfectly developed form and classical lines of ancient Greece. Their peach-like complexion, dark, flashing eyes, and wealth of raven hair, have been the hope and despair of many a love-sick swain from generation to generation; and their charm of face and figure has inspired the artist's brush from Opie to Stanhope Forbes. The women of Scilly are not one whit behind their sisters on the mainland in this respect. They are as buxom, plump, and fair as sea breezes can make them; and when scattered over the fields gathering the sweet-scented blossoms, dressed in their sunbonnets, with ruddy health stamped on every movement of their body, strangers have been known to declare that it is difficult to say which is the lovelier—the bloom on the flowers or the bloom on the maiden's cheek.

The flower season at Scilly lasts well on until April or May, according to weather conditions on the mainland. The harder the winter the better for the trade. The season may be said to be at its best about Easter, when there is an enormous demand for all kinds of flowers, and prices rule high. It is a very busy time, and it would be an object lesson for some of our "Weary Willies" to see how the people rise to the occasion and put their back into the job. Up with the lark, and working while there is a streak of daylight in the sky, every man, woman, and child on the Islands, are engaged in picking the flowers and preparing them for the market.

The flowers are tied in bunches of twelve heads to the bunch, and the stems are then plunged into shallow trays filled with tepid water. This has the effect of developing the bloom, and keeps the flowers fresh until such time as they are ready for packing. The flowers are plucked just as the bud is expanding: if at all blown they will not stand

HARVESTING THE CROP: RIVAL BLOOMS.

carriage, and are much depreciated in value. The bunches are carefully counted, and packed into boxes of roughly-sawn wood, each box containing a given number of bunches. The boxes are then hurried off to the quay for shipment on board the steamer lying alongside the pier. Many consignments are also sent by Parcels Post. From twenty to thirty baskets, filled with flowers, will frequently be sent away from Scilly by one despatch.

One is glad to recognise that this mode of transit has been a very great boon, and especially to the smaller growers. *Pro rata*, the cost of carriage by railway is much greater on small packages than on larger ones, and for the cottager who is only able to gather a few boxes of flowers, this means that railway charges and commission swallow up all the profit. But, by availing himself of the conditions of the Parcels Post, he is able to send his consignments direct to the salesman, and, very frequently, deal with the consumer in person.

It is a very great pity that this principle cannot be still further extended, and the Parcel Post seems to offer a ready-made medium for the purpose. There is the machinery already at hand, and it only needs a little liberality on the part of the Treasury—that is a slight sacrifice of the enormous profits made by the Post Office—to enable the public to reap the benefits of having a Parcel Post really, and truly, within the reach of everybody. When we are out of the clutches of the Railway Companies, perhaps we shall make a move in this direction; but, for the present, our hands are tied by the one-sided bargain made when the Parcel Post was introduced.

It is no use now raking up the ashes of this ill-starred compact—let the dead past bury its dead—but it would be farcical, were not the consequences so serious, to go back to the eighties, and pass in review the negotiations between the Railway Companies and the Post Office, which led up to a mutual agreement for the transmission of parcels by post. After much confabulation and palaver, it was settled that the basis of the said agreement should be that the Post Office retained one moiety of the gross revenue, and that the other moiety should go to the Railway Companies for carrying the parcels. Gracious knows, this was liberal enough, as the parcels had to be collected, delivered, and handled by the Post Office, while all the Railways had

to do was to convey them over their respective systems. Everything was all cut and dried. The Chairman of the Railway Committee was Mr. Grierson, the late General Manager of the Great Western, and the Post Office was represented by two or three high officials, who, one would have thought, might be trusted to look after the public interests. But again it was a case of the spider and the fly; again we walked into the trap so cunningly prepared and baited by the astute representatives of private concerns. At the final meeting of the joint committee, when the agreement was about to be "signed, sealed, and delivered," Mr. Grierson, who presided, happened to say—apparently in quite a casual way—"So it is understood, gentlemen, that we are to take one-half of the gross revenue, and you the other half." "But, of course," said the spokesman for the Post Office, "this only refers to parcels carried by rail. We take the full revenue on all road-borne parcels." "Oh," said Mr. Grierson, "this is a new feature in the case altogether. We must pin you down strictly to the terms of the agreement, which says distinctly that we are to have one-half of the gross revenue."

The contention of the Railway Companies in demanding fifty per cent. of the postage on road-borne parcels, which never passed through their hands was, of course, too outrageous and absurd to stand the test of argument. But the Post Office was in a cleft stick. Unless they came to terms with the Railway Companies, their pet scheme for the introduction of a Parcel Post would probably come to grief. The railway interest was all-powerful in the House of Commons, and the Bill would be opposed, and, most likely, thrown out. So, by way of throwing carrion to the wolves, the Post Office had to "climb down," and conceded another twentieth on rail-borne parcels, making it eleven-twentieths instead of one-half. The arrangement reminds one very much of the Irishman who, like so many more of his compatriots, never recross the Channel after they have once tasted the sweets of living on the "brutal Saxon," who wrote home to his better half and said:—"Sell the pig, Biddy, and come over to this blessed counthry. I'm getting three shillings a day for carrying bricks up a ladder, and there's a fool of a fellow up on top doing all the work." The "fool of a fellow" was the Railway, and

FLOWER CULTURE AT SCILLY: GATHERING ARUM LILIES.

the Irishman the Post Office, though the latter failed to see it at the time.

But for this one-sided bargain, which has tied our hands for so many years, we might, long ago, have had an Agricultural Parcel Post at rates which would have been a real encouragement to this down-trodden branch of trade. Had the revenue been equitably apportioned between the Railway Companies and the Post Office, so that each had its legitimate share, it would be possible to fix a tariff which, without entailing a loss on the Exchequer, would have been much more advantageous to the public. It is estimated that a tariff of 1d. a pound, reckoned from the first pound, would be enough to cover the cost of the service, and leave a fair margin of profit. But, owing to the Railway Companies taking an undue proportion of the total sum collected, and, at the same time, saddling the Department with the great bulk of the work, we are powerless and impotent.

In addition to the various sorts of bulbs like the jonquil and the narcissus, the Scillonians raise a quantity of arum lilies. The arum lily is used largely for Church decoration, and, especially when Easter happens to fall early, there is a great demand for them, and they fetch a good price in Covent Garden and other markets. They are packed in boxes or hampers, each bloom being carefully wrapped in cotton wool, and in this way they ride without injury. Arum lilies are grown in the open, in trenches to protect them from the wind, but without any other kind of shelter whatever. The long, parallel rows of these bell-shaped semi-tropical flowers, with their yellow stamens and dark green foliage, give the place an almost oriental appearance, and reminds one of the marshy ground on the banks of the Nile. A very considerable quantity of wallflowers and anemones are also cultivated, but these are looked upon as merely subsidiary to the main crop.

The scene on the pier at St. Marys on the morning when the steamer is loading flowers for Penzance cannot be matched anywhere else between Scilly and John o' Groats. The steamer is due to start at 9.30 a.m., and, long before, carts begin to arrive from the country bringing in consignments of the precious freight. The Governor's steam launch, probably having a barge in tow, comes down

from Tresco, and boats from St. Martins and St. Agnes forge up alongside, or drop their killicks in the pool. It is flowers, nothing but flowers, everywhere. The boxes are hoisted in by the steam-winch, or slid down an inclined plane into the hold, and by the time the hatches are battened down, and the deck cargo sorted up, the little steamer looks more like a Canton sanpan than a seagoing craft.

On arriving at Penzance the flowers are handed over to the Great Western Railway Company, which maintains a splendidly-equipped service, and does the giant share of the traffic in the West of England. A special train is at once made up, and the flowers expressed right through to Paddington. The distance from Scilly to London, roughly speaking, is about 350 miles, and it shows what modern locomotion, aided by smart management and perfect organisation can accomplish, when these sweet-scented flowers which were waving on their stalks in far-away Scilly less than twenty-four hours before, are exposed for sale in the great and all-absorbing Metropolis.

At the top of the season, from thirty to forty tons of flowers are despatched from Scilly in a single day. When one speaks of a ton of flowers, it conveys but a faint impression of what a ton really means. It is like trying to weigh rose-leaves, or to measure the perfume of the violet. It involves the picking of an almost incalculable number of blooms, the sorting and tying of thousands of bunches, the handling of hundreds of boxes, and their cartage from point to point along the line of route. A ton occupies a space altogether out of proportion to its dead weight: so much so that the Great Western Railway have built specially designed trucks to carry the flowers, each truck, when laden to its full capacity, holding about $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons. A consignment of, say, forty tons, thus requires a train of sixteen trucks to convey the flowers to their destination.

From very modest beginnings the Scilly flower trade has gone on increasing until it has reached a volume never dreamt of by the pioneers of the industry. Starting as a sort of forlorn hope, a bow drawn at a venture, it has virtually eaten up every other calling, and is now the mainstay of the prosperity of the Islands. In 1887—the earliest date for which authentic figures are obtainable—the output was just 100 tons. But the returns for

THE PIER, St. MARYS, SCILLY: LOADING THE STEAMER WITH FLOWERS FOR THE MARKET.

last year (1906) give a total of 835 tons, or more than eight times the quantity in less than twenty years.* It is difficult to estimate the money value of a ton of flowers, as much depends on the state of the markets, and other circumstances, but it is fair to assume that these 835 tons were worth many thousands of pounds. And when it is remembered that flowers are only one of the crops grown, and that the Islands have only a tillable area of some 4,000 acres, it is wonderful what can be done with grit, skill, and perseverance.

And here, if I may be allowed a short digression, is surely a lesson we might take to heart. The cry is that labour is being divorced from the land in consequence of agriculture being a dying industry incapable of supporting a rural population. Urban districts are over-crowded, with all the attendant evils to health, morals, and sanitation, while tens of thousands of acres are going out of cultivation, and reverting to prairie value, simply because it does not pay to till them. Every year the lot of the farmer grows worse and worse. Small holdings, allotments, and labour colonies have been tried with no very encouraging results, and we are more and more at the mercy of the foreigner for our daily subsistence. Yet we see that the Scillonians, occupying three or four small Islands far out into the Atlantic, taken altogether not nearly as big as the Isle of Man, turn their poor and rocky soil to such profitable account that they are able to export thousands of tons of produce annually. There must be something rotten in our land laws which admits of this anomaly, and the secret of it is to be found in over-taxation and unrestrained foreign competition.

It is true, land is cheap at Scilly, and taxes a mere bagatelle, but there are other countervailing disabilities which more than restore the balance. First, there is the distance from the principal markets. The freight and railway charges on flowers between Scilly and London amount to 6s. 6d. per cwt., or £6 10s. per ton. Then there is increased competition. Thirty years ago, when the Scillonians first took up flower culture, the ground was,

* The statistics for 1907 are now to hand, and they shew that over 1,000 tons of flowers were exported during the season just closed. This gave the Railway Company £6,500 for carriage alone, and the quay dues paid to Mr. Smith, at the rate of 10s. a ton, amounted to £500.

comparatively speaking, unoccupied. There were, of course, market gardens where things were forced on under glass. There was the foreigner—he is always with us—dumping his stuff down here free of all tax or toll, and flooding the markets with the product of cheap labour, and fields unassessed by the load of grinding taxation which crushes the life out of the British farmer.

But the cultivation of early spring flowers, and particularly of the daffodil and narcissus out of doors, had not, to any great extent, been attempted. Few of the genus will stand many degrees of frost, and the capriciousness of our spring renders the raising of the tenderer sorts too risky to be remunerative. Now, however, bulb cultivation is spread over a wider area, and notwithstanding its superiority of soil and climate, Scilly, in many respects, is at a disadvantage compared with other localities on the mainland. In the neighbourhood of Penzance, for instance, there are gardens like Mr. Andrew Lawrey's, at Varfell, vying with Scilly in the wealth of their tropical luxuriance, and the vogue has spread even to Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire.

Scilly flowers are first to come in, and have command of the market when bulbs on the Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire fens dare not show their heads above the ground. But as the season advances, distance and heavy charges tell, and some of the coarser sorts will hardly bear the cost of transit. It is not so easy to see where relief is to come from. I believe the railway company does everything possible to encourage the trade, as it is their interest to do, but the distance is nearly 400 miles, and this class of goods has to be handled no less than five times before it reaches its destination.

What is wanted is something like fair play. While the Scillonian is staggering under the truly terrific impost of nearly £7 a ton for carriage, and the heavily-taxed farmer on the mainland is trying to keep his head above water, the Frenchman and the Italian are pouring fruit, vegetables, and flowers into the country, under the conditions which put the native grower out of the race. One need not necessarily be a follower of Mr. Chamberlain to recognise that this one-sided arrangement is fatal to the market gardening, as to nearly every other industry, and, sooner or later, must end in total collapse.

Were one a pessimist inclined to take a gloomy view of things, it would be easy enough to conjure up a picture of despair, and to indulge in foreboding as to what is likely to be the outcome of this so-called free trade: this loading of the dice to the prejudice of the home producer. So far as Scilly is concerned (and it may be taken as typical of many other places scattered over the country) it spells disaster. At no very distant date, unless our fiscal policy undergoes an entire change, Scilly, as a flower-raising centre, will be played out. Already there are signs that high-water mark has been reached. The margin of profit is not what it used to be, competition is keener, and there is the eternal foreigner, like the skeleton at the feast, to be fought against and reckoned with. A visit to Covent Garden in the early morning, when consignments of spring flowers are pouring in from the Continent, and, unkindest cut of all, conveyed at preferential rates by our own railways, should convince the most rabid Cobdenite that we are gradually, but surely, being thrust to the wall.

CHAPTER XXII.

What is to be the Future of Scilly?

IN all this hurly-burly, and clashing of interests, the question arises what is to become of Scilly? It is certain that it can never regain its position as a shipping port, and if, as only seems too probable, flowers should also have to be numbered with the "might have beens," it is to be feared that it will relapse into a state of commercial decrepitude. True, Scilly might be fortified, and form one of the outposts of our sea defences; or the Admiralty might take it in hand, and simply by pitching part of Sampson and Bryher into the sea, convert Crow Sound into a perfectly land-lock harbour, quite equal to Sydney or Falmouth. But it is weary waiting on the Government—heaven helps those who help themselves—and there is nothing for it but for the Scillonians to work out their own salvation. And, it seems to me, that the path lying straight before them—the thing that should be worked for all it is worth—is to bring the Islands under the notice of travellers and tourists, and try to popularise the place as a health resort.

In the present day, when people range over so wide a field in search of health or recreation, it is strange that a place like Scilly, possessing so many advantages and attractions, is not more largely availed of. It is within ten hours of London, and reached by a splendid service of trains on the Great Western Railway, and an equally well-equipped line of steamers. The passage across is now reduced to about three hours. Passing through some of the loveliest scenery in England, and sailing over Southern, sun-lit seas, the journey itself is full of enjoyment. Catching glimpses of the silvery Thames, and hurrying along through parts of Berkshire, Wiltshire, Somerset, and glorious Devon, the "Riviera Express" crosses the Tamar by a high-level bridge, in full view of that magnificent sheet of water the Hamoaze, upon whose broad bosom float the makings of our Navy, from the low-lying, vicious-looking destroyer, to the latest marvel of marine construction.

And, although Cornwall may not enter the list with the Southern counties for a lavish display of wealth, broad

CRUISING AMONG THE SCILLY ISLANDS.

RAZOR-BILLS ON THE ALERT.

acres, and lordly demesnes, it has a ruggedness and a charm all its own. Skirting the north bank of the Lynher, and winding in and out of the smiling valleys and wooded coombes in the neighbourhood of St. Germans, Menheniot, Liskeard, and Bodmin Road, typical Cornwall is reached—the land of frowning rocks, shimmering sands, and sparkling streams; till at last, traversing the disembowelled region west of Truro, Mount's Bay bursts upon the view, with St. Michael's Mount "set like a gem in the silvery sea."

And, once arrived at Scilly, not a dull moment need be spent from start to finish. Are you an artist? Then nowhere else are the skies so blue, or the sea put on such ever-changing hues. Nowhere else are there such stretches of golden sand; such cliffs, clothed in yellow and purple lichens, a never-ending delight to the eye of the painter. Is boating your hobby? Then to cruise among the Islands of this Western Archipelago, each having a beauty of its own; to sail around each headland, and explore each cave and sandy cove; to thread your way between rocky channels chiselled out by the hand of time, is a joy only to be realised by actual experience. Or, are you fond of fishing? Then spread your net and bait your hook anywhere between St. Martins Head and the Bishop, and you may be sure of a haul such as never yet gladdened a fisherman's heart. Get you down to Broad Sound, and to the Western Rocks, which, since time was, have battled with the fierce Atlantic. Here the wild-fowl shriek, and flocks of puffins and razor-bills, jealous of the intrusion on their domain, range themselves in rows on some adjacent rock, and sit in solemn conclave, as if debating whether it were best to head an assault or beat an ignominious retreat. The place swarms with pollack, which, in the form of "buckhorn," at one time was the chief mainstay of the Scillonian's larder, but now allowed to go scot-free. Having provided some pilchards as a bait, and overhauled the tackle to see that the lines are free, you set to work, and in almost less time than it takes to tell, enough fish is caught to fill the stern-sheets of the boat. I have known over a hundredweight of pollack landed as the result of a single expedition.

Nor does this by any means exhaust the attractions to the Islands. The climate compares favourably with anything to be found in Southern Europe, and is far superior

to many of the places on the Continent which are advertised as hygienic Edens. The summers are never so hot as to produce a feeling of lassitude, and the winters are mild and equable. The range of temperature is remarkably small: the maximum seldom exceeding 70° and the minimum rarely falling below 40°. Frost and snow are practically unknown. Many times, I have sat basking in the sun at Scilly in the middle of December, when at Torquay or Bournemouth one would need a great-coat and a muffler as a protection. The rainfall is not excessive, and the Islands having a granite formation, with a light, porous soil, there is rapid evaporation, and not a suspicion of damp or malaria so detrimental to the maintenance of a high standard of health. Without being enervating, the air is soft and balmy, and there is always a fresh breeze straight in from the Atlantic.

Two facts alone bear witness to the salubrity of the place —the character of the vegetation, and the longevity of the inhabitants. Semi-exotic plants, only to be met with in hothouses and conservatories on the mainland, grow in the open, and luxuriate in the pure, sunny atmosphere. I have no means of comparing the vital statistics of the Islands with those of other districts, but the average duration of life is certainly much longer than in less favoured localities. Octogenarians are as plentiful as blackberries in September, and men continue to be hale and hearty long after the allotted span is past. When a man reaches the age of sixty we generally speak of him as "the old Mr. So-and-So," but at Scilly he is known as "the boy." I recall an incident, many years ago, of speaking to a man at work in a field. He was mowing rye, and handling the scythe with all the swing and vigour of early youth. The man was somewhat bent, with a long beard, and a profusion of grey locks enveloping throat and neck, but otherwise bore no traces of age. Chatting over the condition of the weather, and the out-put of the crop, I happened to mention that mowing was warm work, and, I dared say, he felt rather tired. "Tired," said my friend, "why should I be tired? I am only ninety come next Spring, and as well able to do a day's work as ever I was in my life—I am never tired."

Much more might be said in praise of Scilly, but lest it may be thought that I am prepossessed in its favour, I

A SUMMER'S DAY: VISITORS AMONG THE WESTERN ROCKS.

BIRDS NESTING: THE BLACK GULL'S NEST.

advise all those who refuse to take my word for it, to go and see for themselves. Scilly is no place for the mere tripper—'Arry and 'Arriet would not feel at home there. It cannot compete with Blackpool or Douglas, Margate or Yarmouth, for the polyglot character of the crowd. People who want balls or concerts, steam-organs and roundabouts, and all that sort of thing, had better go somewhere else. But for anyone in search of rest and quiet; for the jaded man of business who wants to drive the cobwebs out of his brain, and whose blood needs more oxygen; for the votary of pleasure who has supped to the full of dissipation, and drained the cup of gaiety to the dregs, Scilly is an ideal place and cannot be beaten.

There are the Islands moored stem and stern in the Atlantic, offering all the benefits of a sea voyage without the risk of being sea-sick. There is a place bathed in perpetual sunshine, and swept by invigorating breezes charged with ozone fresh from Nature's own laboratory. There the invalid, or the valetudinarian, may breathe an air grateful to the most sensitive lungs, and revel in scenery and surroundings which act on the spirits like a charm. The climate has the rare advantage that it is never too hot and never too cold. In short, Scilly fulfils all the conditions of a first-class sanatorium, and the wonder is that it has never been discovered and boomed as many other inferior places have been—*ad nauseam*.

If Scilly were only situated off the coast of France or Italy—perched on some mountain slope in the region of perpetual snows, or known as some Belgian "spa" or German "bad"—how people would flock to it! What flaming posters would meet the eye! What ink would be shed in describing its manifold attractions! How guide-books would rave and fashionable doctors prescribe! But because it is on British soil, within easy distance of London and other great centres of population, and can be reached by an English railway, and an English steamboat, at little cost, and without any difficulty, it is given the go-by. But that is "Pretty Fanny's way."

THE END.

SCILLY ISLES.

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